

SPICY



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"After staring until my eyes ached."

S P I C Y.

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS. MARTHA J. LAMB.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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TO
MARY E. WHITE,
IN MEMORY OF AN UNSPEAKABLE GOOD,
THIS VOLUME
IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

1125418

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S P I C Y.

CHAPTER I.

HOUSE HUNTING.

WE moved on the 1st of May, 1862.

On that pivot hung my destiny.

Otherwise my crazy bark might never have drifted upon the sea of letters.

On one of the last days of April, prior to that date a little more than a twelve-month, Leonardus had donned a spick-span-new suit of army gray, shouldered his rifle and gone to the wars.

During the summer that followed I consoled myself in manufacturing havelocks and attending soldiers' aid societies; but when the dark, cold, long-to-be-remembered winter sprang upon me I found no choice of occupations, but was compelled to turn all my energies into the effort to keep the temperature in our elegant white stone palace on the avenue above freezing-point. A growing distaste for frescoed walls, high ceilings, and plate glass, culminated one day, while the mercury was fifteen degrees below zero, and a northeast gale blowing almost as hard within doors as without, by my wrapping myself up and setting out on a house-hunting expedition.

A few blocks above us stood a queer, old-fashioned cottage, whose geography was not written upon the face of it. It was in the centre of eight or ten full-sized city lots, shaded by some large leafy trees, and by the pretentious edifices of the Garden City of the West. I can hardly account for the subtle influence which induced me to turn my head in passing, but a great staring poster—To LET—upon the front-door caused me to push wide open the rickety gate, and pick my way up the icy walk, which was being swept clean of snow by the fitful gusts. I gave the bell a slippery jerk, and the handle separated from its wire and adhered fast to my glove. It had done its work, however, for a little, sallow-faced woman came to the door, and, in answer to my apologies and inquiries, took me through the house. It was snug and homelike. I was struck particularly by the noticeable absence of the so-called modern improvements.

"No furnace!—no speaking-tubes!—no dumb-waiters! How pleasant!" I remarked to the woman.

She looked at me in astonishment, and I explained.

"I have had a surfeit of those things, and choose to dispense with them altogether. I seek now for personal comfort. Can the house be made warm with stoves and grates?"

"Oh, yes, if you don't mind buying a large quantity of coal. It takes seventeen tons for the season, or somewhere about that quantity."

"Seventeen tons only! Why, I shall not burn a coal-hod less than thirty-five tons where I am now, and I have not been free from a shiver since the 1st of November. I'll take the house."

"You have not seen it all yet."

"It don't matter as long as I am satisfied."

I went directly home, and wrote a note to the real-estate agents who had the property in charge, which resulted, a week or so later, in my signing a lease, and congratulating myself upon the ease I had acquired in the transaction of business.

Among other things, I negotiated for a series of repairs, and, as the spring advanced, workmen were to be seen as thick as bees on the premises. I stepped in once or twice to learn progress, and was informed by the "boss" that the place would be ready for me at least a week before moving-day. Thus I rested.

Some friends from Albany paid me an unexpected visit about that time. I was desirous of showing them every possible attention, as they had never been West before, and consequently took them to see all the lions, from the top of the court-house to the Artesian well, and devoted our evenings to a round of entertainments. They left on an Eastern-bound train at ten o'clock the night before the 1st of May.

As I was pulling out my hair-pins preparatory to retiring to rest, I gave my first serious attention to the moving of to-morrow—a new experience for me; and ignorance was unquestionably bliss.

"It will be no great affair," I soliloquized.

"Handy, good-natured draymen will do the work. They will wheel out sofas, chairs, tables, beds, etc., put them on large carts, pull up carpets and pile on the top, lay pictures anywhere on soft places, tie books up in blankets, pack clothes in trunks and bureau drawers, and tuck clocks, vases, and ornaments in waste corners—" I was in bed by the time I got to corners, and fell asleep, and dreamed I was moving by telegraph, and that my silver tea-set and a half a dozen lounges were galloping along astride the wires.

I was waked by the bursting into the room of my sixteen-year-old sister Spicy, with a little scream of surprise at my tardiness.

"What, not up! Why, it has been broad daylight for an hour! My trunk is packed; I've taken the curtains down in my room, and made a bag for the cat."

Just then the breakfast-bell rang.

"Go down, please, and pour the coffee, and say I will be there presently," I remarked, hurrying at my toilet.

"Who shall I address, since there is not a soul but you and I to sit at the first table?"

"Surely, we are alone again. But you may tell Myra to be getting things ready in the kitchen, and Maggie, instead of stopping to wait on the table, had better go for the wagons."

"And that other person—have you no orders for her?"

"No. Her head is worth a dozen of mine in an emergency. I shall be more likely to go to her before the day is over for directions. But what makes you persist in calling her *that other person*? Why don't you say Nursy Brown, as I do?"

"Because Brown is such a common name, and she seems such an uncommon person. There it is again! *Person* must be the word. I can't say *woman*, because that would sound so much older than she really is. I can't say *girl*, for that, I think, would sound as much too young, and not apply at all; and of course she isn't a lady, or she wouldn't be out at service. By the way, where did you pick her up?"

"She called here one rainy morning, almost a year ago, and applied for the situation. I had been wishing to make a change for some time, but had postponed the evil day, and this seemed a good opportunity for doing so without giving myself extra trouble. She had no references, so I took her on trial. She has remained ever since, and I like her for many reasons, but mostly because she is an American, and so quiet and unpretending, and capable withal. She told me to call her Nursy Brown; I don't even know her first name."

"How strange not to have asked! I should have wanted to know if for no other reason only because she did not out with it in the first place. What did you say a spell ago about my pouring your coffee?"

"No matter. I am just ready to go down myself now;" for, whatever my faults, it is one of my cardinal virtues to dress quickly, and, buttoning my cuffs as

I ran, I preceded Spicy to the dining-room.

It was a well-ordered breakfast that smoked its greeting, and we did ample justice to every article on the table, and sipped our coffee with as much negligent ease as if a change of base were not in contemplation. When we were quite through I was summoned to the culinary regions.

"What is all this?" I asked, stopping on the threshold of the kitchen, like an exclamation point in the middle of a sentence.

"Nothing, ma'am, only I am getting things ready, as Miss Spicy said."

"I should think as much!"

The room was literally piled with boxes, buckets, barrels, kettles, and every other conceivable jimerack that could be found in a country grocery!

"I have some empty barrels here, and shall I pack in them?" asked Myra.

"Yes, you may as well. Put these jars in first and get them out of the way."

There were twenty-five of them; but they proved awkward things to pack, especially in a barrel! I helped. We tried them first on one side, then on the other, upside down and downside up, and at last stored away six!

Myra looked perplexed! "I do wish they would not make these things hollow," she said.

"So do I; but you must stuff in plates, bottles, frying-pans, and platters, and try to fill up the chinks. Manage it some way, I have all I can do up-stairs," and, having given the intelligible direction, I left hastily.

"Where shall I put the crockery?"

asked Maggie, anxiously, as I flew through the dining-room.

Bright's crib stood in the little hall ready for its journey.

"Here, this will do, and then there was the hamper and the clothes-basket."

"Medley! Medley! come here!" cried Spicy from the front door.

I don't know what I ever did that I must have been punished with such a name! I think it was wrong, whatever my offence, to have fastened it upon me, a helpless, inexperienced infant! How am I to know what a potent influence it may have had upon my whole character during my eventful earthly history! And another thing that cuts me, it is hardly ever pronounced in full except on occasions like this! I am called Meddie, ordinarily.

"Only think!" Spicy went on, as I obeyed her summons, "these men say they can't wait a minute, for they have ever so many jobs on hand, and that you must be a funny woman to send for them before your packing is done!"

"Go right up-stairs and begin taking out the furniture and carpets," I said quietly. "We sha'n't detain you many minutes."

Up they went, two great, brawny, red-faced men, and I appointed Spicy doorkeeper extraordinary to their highnesses.

Before following them, I looked into the parlor long enough to see Nursy Brown tying up my crimson satin chairs in their covers, and folding rugs and tidies with mathematical exactness. Little Bright, perched on the sofa among his toys, shook his patent rattlebox and crowed, and I could but stop to give him

a chapter of hugs and kisses. It did not hinder me, so I thought, yet when I got to my room I found it in the wildest disorder. The bed had been taken out, the carpet ripped up, and grim dust was holding high carnival. My Saratoga trunk had moved—empty.

It was not a season for lamentations, so I made the most of the receptacles that remained. Alas, for my unlucky wardrobe! I folded for once without regard to creases, and squeezed every thing into the smallest compass. I jumbled cuffs, collars, perfumery-bottles, camphor, and overshoes, into one compartment together, and hustled whisk-brooms, hair-brushes, and match-safes, into the box with my best bonnet, and what would not go in anywhere else I tied up in a sheet.

Seven loads! when I thought there would be only two or three! And lastly, the odds and ends. They were the most bulky of all my possessions. Such a quantity of bottles and jars I am sure never graced any other mansion!

"Why didn't we think to send them back to the grocery?" remarked Myra, after they were stacked up on two carts and pretty generally cracked.

"Or, we might have left them altogether, since the cost of the whole lot could not equal the price I am paying per load for their moving," I remarked, dryly.

Thus we grow in wisdom through many difficulties.

At ten minutes past four in the afternoon we took possession of my new house, or, more correctly speaking, my old house, for a portion of it, one of its many wings, was the veritable shanty

which first saw the light when the great city was a little fur station. Spicy had ridiculed my choice, could not understand how I could "descend from an elevated marble front into such a coop," ever since she first learned of my intention, and her exclamation as she stepped upon the veranda coincided with her previously-expressed views:

"It is a piece of Noah's steamboat washed ashore! Tell me the truth, were these doors and windows manufactured since the flood?"

After a hopeless effort to climb over a pile of mattresses which had been left directly before the door, she called out to know how she was going to get inside.

"Wait a moment and I will remove those things," said Nursy Brown from the top of the stairs.

I was behind Spicy. She turned quickly and looked at me:

"What a sweet voice! It just magnetizes me. Do you know, Medley—"

"Call me Meddie, darling, on to-day of all days! Medley is too suggestive."

"I will," said Spicy, laughing. "But what I was about to say was, that I am beginning to think that *person* is some princess in disguise."

"How absurd!"

"Not so very absurd, either. She is all wound up in mystery, and her name fits her badly."

"How so?"

"Have you to ask? can't you see that hideous cap she wears drawn down over her forehead as well as I? Have you never looked into her magnificent eyes? or remarked her beautiful teeth?"

"Certainly; but what of that? I see even more. She is a nursery maid whose

good qualities in her particular sphere render her invaluable. But as for her beauty, it has not yet struck me. Indeed, I regard her as excessively plain."

"With that head-gear truly so. Oh, dear! Chaos exaggerated!—what a looking place!"

We had at last crossed the threshold of my future home, and stood in the middle room, with the curious bay-window, which I had marked out as my future library. Every thing had been dumped in there pell-mell. The refrigerator stood up near the mantel, piled to the ceilings with pictures and parcels! The piano was covered with platters, pokers, and washboards; my elegant inlaid cabinet was lying on its back under a pile of chairs. My library table, top downward, supported one of the servants' trunks, and my two-hundred-dollar lace curtains were wrapped around the molasses jug.

We both stared aghast! A moment after Spicy tripped up the stairs on a tour of investigation. Presently she called me to come too, and having no where else to go I obeyed. We could scarcely get into the rooms, for my bureaux were all placed in a row in one of the halls.

"This is the very oddest pattern of a building!" said Spicy, looking about.

We soon came to another flight of stairs, just like those in front, which descended into a spacious hall, opening through a glass-door upon a graveled walk to the north gate of the grounds.

"Now, I smell romance in the air," exclaimed Spicy, pretending to make a telescope of her two hands.

I laid my hand just then upon a side door, which I had not before seen, and

revealed to our surprise an immense pantry! In it bedsteads and trunks were heaped promiscuously!

"When will wonders cease?" I asked.

"Can't say," replied Spicy.

We went outside, wandered round the house where there was green turf to step on, and at last came in through the laundry and kitchen.

"Tack! tack! tack! Who's nailing down carpets?" asked Spicy.

"Nursy Brown, ma'am," replied Myra. "She's getting a room ready for you to stay in while we regulate and prepare something to eat."

"Splendid!" cried Spicy. "I am hungry enough to eat a hard-shell Baptist. Well, well, Meddie, if here isn't your baby asleep in a champagne basket! You dear, precious, darling, littlesweety," and, before I could throw in a remonstrance, the thoughtless girl had buried her face among his clustering curls to kiss him, and he waked.

He was not going to be defrauded of his accustomed nap, which had been postponed to such a late hour, without a protest, and set up a scream which brought Nursy Brown flying to the spot before either of us had time to turn round. She knelt down, spoke softly to the little cherub, kissed him, turned him over upon his side, and hushed him back to his dreams.

"That was my naughty work," said Spicy, "but I could not help it; sure as I live and breathe and hope to die the next minute, I couldn't. He is too enticing a subject altogether. Better put him away out of my sight."

"I have the blue-room, over the north hall, almost ready for you; perhaps you

had better go up and lay your things off there, and I will bring you some chairs presently," remarked Nursy Brown.

I thanked my good angel and departed.

"The *blue-room*, indeed!" exclaimed Spicy, pausing before the open door.

It was in the shape of a triangle, with a slanting ceiling on one side. The walls were hung with a fanciful blue paper. The carpet just laid was a piece of my old Wilton, with a blue ground, and the blue matched the paper with pretty effect. The bed-room suite was blue medallion on satinwood, one that I had purchased the previous year for another and entirely different apartment. It had been chosen for the blue-room, with an eye to the admirable fitness of things, and was neatly arranged for our immediate convenience.

I looked over Spicy's shoulder in blank amazement! Then I remembered how I had not seen the whole house before renting it. I stepped in, glanced around, and then went to the window, which had a pleasant view of flowers and shrubbery in the yard.

"Where does this door go to?" asked Spicy.

She had crossed the room and was trying to open what seemed to be the upper half of a door of a very antique pattern, and adjusted to the outside of the wall without casings or panels. Just as I turned my head her efforts were rewarded, and so unexpectedly to her, that she came near being precipitated headlong down three or four steep steps into a sharp-pointed gable-roofed room with a snowy-white pine floor. It was dimly lighted by a diminutive square four-paned glass window at the far end, over which

clambering grape-vines from the arbor below had improvised a curious blind.

"Why, it is the closet belonging to this room, I suppose," was my reply.

Spicy crowded herself in and I followed.

"I'll tell you what it reminds me of: the old minister's postscript, which was always longer than the letter itself," she said, smiling.

"Just the place for storing trunks," I remarked, after fitting my head into the widened space about the ridge-pole so that I could stand upright.

"How could you get them in? I see no place but that little hole in the wall which has just admitted us, and a close fit at that. No, Meddie. I see how it is. This is the ghost department. I am not going to sleep in the blue-room for one."

I laughed.

"We are in the attic of the laundry, darling. Can't you see where it is joined to the main building? It was once, no doubt, the well-to-do chamber of an early settler, who expanded as the city grew and built on."

There was a pile of rubbish in one corner, and I crouched under the slanting roof to see of what it was composed. Some old yellow manuscripts appertaining to law, a copy of "Barnes's Notes on the Gospels," "The History of Scotland," a pamphlet on natural history, two or three old *Harper's Magazines*, some *New York Observers*, and lastly, and, as it proved, by no means leastly, a bundle of letters tied neatly together with a piece of red tape.

"Spiritual crumbs! Fragments from ghostdom! What! are you going to

take them out from here?" exclaimed Spicy.

"Yes. They will serve for our evening's entertainment, possibly."

"But they may be full of secrets which we ought never to know!"

"If of any very grave importance they would not have been thrown away, in my opinion."

"Oh, we can't tell, Meddie. Somebody may have lost or forgotten them. It don't seem right to read them, anyhow."

"Nonsense, Spicy! You are tired and dyspeptic. What can there be wrong about it? My conscience is perfectly easy on the subject."

"But the very look at them gives me the creeps all up and down my back. See how I tremble;" and she put her hand in mine.

"You are a goosey," I said, pinching her cheeks.

Myra appeared with a waiter of tea and toast and cold boiled tongue, and we forgot all else in our greediness. Fifteen minutes later we gathered up the crumbs and the empty dishes, set them out in the hall, and declared ourselves greatly refreshed.

Myra looked in again presently to say: "Nursy Brown wishes the ladies to stay up here until every thing is fixed up and righted down stairs. Here are your matches, ma'am, for the gas when the daylight is over."

"That is a nurse worth having, Meddie. I should keep her always, and then will and bequeath her to my sister, if I were you," exclaimed Spicy.

I was just dropping into an easy-chair, which had been placed in the room by

unseen hands, when Spicy threw the package of letters at me.

"Do find out what they are as quick as possible; I know we shall both be sorry for it, but I sha'n't rest until it is over. They are in a gentleman's hand."

"I thought they were in my hand."

"You just notice, Meddie, those p's, and the loops of the g's. They are certainly masculine."

"I didn't know that letters of the alphabet had any gender."

She came to me, pulled out one of the letters and commenced its examination.

"He signs himself 'G. G.' Did you ever hear that conundrum, 'Why is the letter g like death?'"

"No, Spicy. Why?"

"Because it makes ghosts of hosts, and is always in the middle of slaughter."

"Do look at this letter. It is as thick as a small book, and as full of romance as an egg is of meat. I've seen the word *love* twice!"

I took it from her hand, smiling. It was in a bold type of penmanship, not handsome, and very closely lined. It was a reply to the questionings of a friend, and the subject was of the most delicate character. The writer, from certain allusions, had evidently offered himself previously to his fair correspondent, and her decision remained in abeyance. Meanwhile he had been called upon for a chapter in his earlier history, and after some apparent hesitation it had been produced.

I read aloud:—

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERIOUS LETTER.

"As I told you, Helen, I completed my sophomore year in Williams College in the summer of 1852. I think you are already familiar with some of the peccadilloes of my college life, and now I will acquaint you with what occurred on the memorable moonless evening previous to that commencement.

"I had distinguished myself some weeks before by mapping out a novel parade over the burial of Euclid, which had so taken with the boys that I had been elected chairman of the committee who perfected the programme and of fended the faculty. In order to swell our numbers we invited several from the junior class, and then levied a tax on all to defray expenses. At the prize exhibition in the church we distributed notices of what was in contemplation later in the evening, but it was full half-past eleven o'clock before we had our torch-light procession formed into line. By the time we had reached the stage which had sprung up since dark in front of the old college buildings, every house in the village had poured its occupants into the street. Not less than eight hundred, more probably one thousand, people stood in the dew and damp to witness the pageant.

"The funeral car was drawn by six white horses, and upon a piece of white marble in the centre lay the remains of the departed. The chief mourners were 'Prof. Tat' in effigy (Prof. Tat was the way our faithful mathematical professor was dubbed), and the widow of Euclid with a wailing babe in her arms. The

last-named individual was a dumpy little body, with a round face hidden under a large Navarino bonnet trimmed with geese feathers and crape. The other mourners were grotesquely attired, each carrying out some extravagant caprice of his own, and the effect was greatly heightened by the brilliant light of the torches.

"We had halted, and were about to ascend the platform, when the discovery was noted that, through haste in its construction, we had forgotten the steps! A good-natured freshman, seeing our embarrassment, doubled himself for the benefit of the crowd, and over him the principal actors crawled, tumbled, and rolled up, amid roars of laughter from one end of the village to the other, the amused spectators supposing it a part of the anticipated performance.

"Six of the best singers among us constituted our choir, and were dressed in long white farmers' frocks. They wore hideous false-faces which had movable jaws, and when they appeared on the stage they threw them wide open, and waited the order to sing. The volley of music which poured forth at last occasioned great applause, and then followed an oration from the brain and lips of yours truly, which nearly cost him his voice, after which came another song, excelling the first in volume, and finally a poem, full of good points and witty hits, a mock eulogy on the virtues of the deceased. It closed thus:

'We'll bury him in the earth so deep,
Prof. Tat never more can find him;'

at which the sophomores groaned.

"When all was ready, we started for the grave, and the assemblage followed.

Up hill and down grade, by farm-house and through glen, for one, two, three, ay, four miles, this weird procession moved in solemn state. Then came the welcome order 'to the right,' and into green pastures we turned, and by still waters we tarried, until the last rites had been performed. A funeral pile was kindled after the manner of the *heathen Chinese*, and the widow advanced with the apparent intention of perishing with her lamented, but after going through a variety of gyrations she tossed her baby into the devouring elements, turned immediately and selected a cavalier, took his arm and headed the march homeward.

"The Gods usually sell their wares at a fair price, but that night's fun cost me dear. I got to my room just as day dawned in the east, damp, cold, and weary. I paused before my little, one-sided looking-glass (an heirloom in the family), and was shocked at the one-sided picture of blood-shot eyes and haggard features which I presented. To tell you the truth, Helen, I never took any special pride in my red hair, but on that morning it seemed to strike me as especially and altogether unbecoming, and finally settled upon my imagination as a positive calamity. I dwell upon these facts, trivial as they may seem, because from them, and the consequent loss of self-respect, I date many of the untoward events which have since rendered my life desolate. I found before the day was far advanced that I had taken a severe cold in my head, and that my throat was wretchedly sore.

"I hung about the church during the exercises, which I remember only as having been hot and long. In the evening I

was a favored guest at a private banquet, where we ate roast lamb and other delicacies of the season in a subterranean apartment. I was obliged to take an inventory of my pocket-handkerchiefs before dressing for the occasion, and, as they numbered only nine, I applied to my chum for the loan of three more, in order to make myself presentable. At two o'clock in the morning I returned to my room to dump my traps into a trunk and get ready to leave Williamstown in the stage at seven.

"Did you ever take a ride over the Berkshire Hills? If so, I need not add here that it has no direct tendency toward soothing irritable nerves, particularly if you occupy the back seat in a crowded stage. I was not in a state of mind or body to be envied when I commenced the descent of Savoy Mountain, for the five long, dusty miles of continuous climbing since we left the Adams valley, with its innumerable sharp, short, jerking, jolting downs, had failed to improve my temporal condition. My eyes took no delight in the wild, romantic scenery of this region, about which Old-World travellers might well afford to rave; hills swelling above each other, and undulations shapely and uncouth, smooth and rugged, graceful and fantastic, thrown negligently side by side, bounding the view in every direction. I simply sat bolt upright like any other schoolboy, clinching my umbrella firmly with one hand, and using my pocket-handkerchief with the other, meanwhile staring at the two martyred-looking four-legged animals before us, which according to the driver were 'hosses,' as they rushed on furiously without regard to rough and

stony places, seeming only to desire to keep out of the way of the ponderous vehicle in their rear.

"All at once I was conscious of an awkward, bewildering sense of being about to stand on my head, and a crash!

"The next I knew of myself I was trying to disengage my foot from somebody's limp bonnet. The whole establishment was literally in a heap by the wayside, one of the fore-wheels having divorced itself without the aid of Western lawyers, and started off sidewise on its own account.

"*The team* had come to a stand-still, without showing the slightest sign of embarrassment or surprise. Indeed, I suppose they had lived in this wicked world so long that they were prepared for any mishap. They stood calmly nibbling the few stunted blades of grass within range of their noses on the overhanging bank. The driver, a good-natured, long-haired, middle-aged man, was looking after the killed and wounded. He found several cases of torn clothes, and one or two serious scares. I came forth from the wreck with an ugly bump on the side of my head.

"Upon examination it was found quite impossible to patch up the stage, even for temporary convenience, and we were obliged to walk to the nearest farmhouse and wait for the master of ceremonies to institute researches in regard to the whereabouts of some one who had vehicles to lend. It was a two-story cottage of the ancient New England cut and finish which we reached at length, and entered through a grassy enclosure and a wide-open door. A motherly-looking

matron came forward and gave us kindly greeting. She rolled up the paper curtains in her best room—they had large flowers in the centre—and pushed up the windows. There was a table, with Baxter's 'Saints' Rest' and 'The Life of Mrs. Isabella Graham' upon it, with two large drawers in front, a quaint rocking-chair, covered with copperplate calico, and a high bed, ornamented with a patch-work bed-quilt and valance, in the room. Enough chairs speedily made their appearance for our accommodation, and the good woman listened with undisguised interest to the account of our unlucky catastrophe, and then bathed my wound with arnica, and gave me some sneezing-snuff for my cold.

"I saw a pretty, rosy-cheeked girl in the next room braiding hats out of palm-leaf split very fine, and, like college boys in general, I was taken with thirst immediately. I went out and asked her for a drink of water, but she served me in such a high-bred style that I had nothing to do but return to the parlor when I had drained the goblet. I dropped into the nearest chair, however, and through the half-open door watched her movements. She held a consultation with her mamma, after which she laid an immaculate table-cloth upon two tables put together, one being high and narrow and the other low and broad; plates and knives and forks followed; tumblers for the company and mugs for the family; a big pitcher of water; a plate of cabbage; another of potatoes; a small round dish full of turnips; a platter of corn-beef; a boiled Indian pudding; a custard pie; and the salt-cellar, and the vinegar cruet, and the pepper-box, and the molasses

cup, and the butter, just where it was most convenient to tuck them.

"The men folks meanwhile came in from their work, and washed their hands and faces at the sink, at the far end of the kitchen, and wiped them on a rolling towel. Then they all pulled out their pocket-combs and straightened out their locks. When they were ready, we were invited to the table. They stood back until we were all seated, and then squeezed themselves in where they could get a chance. It was a well-cooked and palatable dinner, and the hungry stage passengers did it ample justice. While we were eating, the pretty Mary Ann stood at the back of our chairs, and kept the flies from the table with branches of asparagus, and the family cat jumped into each of our laps to ascertain for herself, no doubt, whether we had all the prerequisites for her intimate friendship.

"We could hear the rolling of distant thunder as we climbed into the red-and-blue farmer's wagon, all innocent of springs, which the driver had secured with which to finish our journey. As the rising cloud in the west obscured the sun's rays, I looked for my umbrella. Alas, it had been spilled in the general spill, and no one had had the forethought to gather it up! The lowering blackness grew nearer and still more near. The thunders bellowed in our very ears. The storm was upon us. No soft, warm, refreshing, namby-pamby drizzle, but a great splashing, dashing, deluging Massachusetts pour! Bonnets and hats wilted like young tomato plants in the hot sun! We were—in a much shorter space of time than it takes to tell it—soaked from the crowns of our heads to the soles of our

feet. Simultaneously with the wetting came a violent pelting with hailstones. A barn, with its two great doors open, caught the driver's eye. It was a little off the road, but the horses' heads were turned toward it; a tip one way, a tip the other, a twist, the striking of the fore-wheels against the wagon body, rapid jolting over a few loose planks, and a sudden elevation, brought us under its friendly shelter, where we sat dripping and waiting and thinking, and thinking and dripping and waiting, for a full round miserable hour.

"As the storm abated, we were backed skilfully out of our place of refuge, and the horses put into a run to make up for time lost. At sunset I was set down at Rockland Place, and most affectionately welcomed by my father and mother, although in my disfigured condition I must have been any thing but an object of parental pride.

"I may as well stop here to tell you that from my earliest recollections I had understood that I was destined for the ministry. My own predilections had not been taken into account any more than the fact that, as a schoolboy, I had floundered about seven-eighths of the time in a slough of unintelligible learning. 'It run in the family,' my grandmother used to say. Her grandfather and father were both ministers, and she married a minister. My honored sire had veered from the clerical groove, and settled down early in life as a tiller of the soil; but I, of the later generation, was doomed to walk in the footsteps of my ancestors.

"Rockland Place, our old homestead, has been described to you in a former letter —"

"We must look that up; I would like to hear about it," interrupted Spicy.

"— hence I will not recapitulate its charms just now. I am sure that my mother's sofa-rocker never fitted all the angles in my body so satisfactorily on any other occasion. Her cosy, cheerful sitting-room, with the books on the table, the flowers on the mantel, and the kitten on the rug, never seemed half so cheerful and comfortable as then. I fell into a state of agreeable content. The very air was redolent with repose and rested me.

"Supper was served on an old-fashioned round ebony table at my elbow. A cup of fine oolong tea, smoking waffles, delicious bread and butter, and strawberries and cream—real cow's cream, as brother Fred would say. My sister Phebe was at Mount Holyoke Seminary, and it never occurred to me to inquire after her until the evening was far spent.

"*'She is to be at home to-morrow,'* said my mother. *'A young miss from the school is coming with her to spend the vacation.'*

"*'May she be hanged first,'* was my impulsive rejoinder.

"My father and mother both looked up in astonishment!

"*'How is that?'* asked the former; *'it is the first time I ever heard you object to visitors!'*

"*'I don't object to them as a rule,'* I replied, slightly ashamed of myself for expressing my mind so hastily. *'But I am not in a mood just now for making myself agreeable. I can't speak, as you see, without sneezing, and even then I must speak through my nose, which gives my voice an intolerable twang. Strangers*

are an abomination under such circumstances, and school-girls, if possible, a degree worse. And South Hadley girls above all others. Tall, prim, school-marmish paragons of perfection, got up with special reference to missionaries and country ministers with small means.'

"'Take it easy, my son. This little girl who is coming is no husband hunter, and I don't believe she would lay violent hands upon you if she were,' said my father, in his serio-comic style.

"I was angry with the good man for laughing at me, and I was angry with myself for being angry. I was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and my mother hurried me off to bed and nursed me with the most loving attention. But, in spite of hot ginger tea and mustard drafts, I passed a feverish, restless night, and, when the sun in the discharge of his public duty arose next morning, I was painfully conscious of dull, heavy aches all over my body.

"I dressed myself, for I could breathe better sitting up, and joined the family at the breakfast-table. I had no appetite, however, I was only ornamental there. After prayers I went out on the veranda. The storm had cleared away and the air was fresh and bracing. Prince, my favorite pony, was feeding on the lawn. I asked my father if he didn't think it would be a brilliant idea for me to saddle him and take a ride. He smiled, and said that it so seemed to him, if I was willing to make the ride a matter of convenience. He wanted to send for the mail, and my mother wanted a bag of flour from the mill.

"I bathed my face plentifully with water—it is one of my remedies for a cold

in the head—and then mounted my steed and cantered away. It was a glorious morning. Bryant must have had such a one in his mind when he spoke of the pure air up in this part of the world as a 'spiritual thing.' By the way, his birth-place is just over the hill by the meeting-house road. I could see the roof and trim chimneys from among the poplars which had cast their shadows over them for scores of years. How his boyhood must have been dotted through and through with similar bright days, more particularly grateful just after the earth had been washed by a shower like that of yesterday!

"The post-office was in a small store, where groceries, hardware, confectionery, and millinery dwelt in harmony together. The store-keeper was also the post-master and the town-clerk. He lived in the other end of the building, and his wife tended shop while he ate his meals. They were a well-assorted pair, patient in the pursuit of knowledge and invaluable to the society in which they moved. Mr. Foote spent most of his time in the store door, his help-meet in the pantry-window of the basement. He was of medium stature, slightly bent, and fifty. His large, greenish eyes took me in that morning and well-nigh swallowed me.

"'Hav'n't you been riding that nag ruther fast for a warm mornin'? Home from college, eh? I don't see as you look as if you know any more than you did when you went up there. Goin' to help the old man about his hayin', or have you got too stuck up for that? Reckon you've spread it pretty hard,' was the salutation with which I was greeted.

"I asked for letters, and Prince lifted up one of his fore-feet, ostensibly to kick off the flies, and put it down again.

"There's only one here for your folks, and it's got a name on it that I suppose belongs to the school-gal Phebe is goin' to bring along with her. I don't know where it's from, but it's post-marked Buffalo. Guess it's a love-letter. If your folks are gittin her up here to make a match for you, they'll have to work lively.'

"Thank you, I suppose they will. Can I have the letter?'

"The man shifted his position and sat down on a keg of molasses. Then he called out:

"Esther, fetch me that letter we were a talkin' about. The young parson wants it.' Then to me, 'How much better off do you take it you be than my boy who is milkin' cows and diggin' potatoes for a living?'

"I really don't know, sir. I hope he is quite well,' I replied.

"Just then the document was brought to me, and after reading the address, 'Miss Ida Everett,' in a bold, dashing hand, I put it in my side-pocket, and turned my face millward. I had scarcely proceeded half a dozen rods when I heard my name called, and looking up saw Mrs. Cook standing in the front door of her little cottage. I reined Prince up so close to the great flat stone which formed her door-step, that I nearly broke down her spotted lily bush.

"Well, this is a surprise now! Be's you home from college, Gideon?'

"I answered in the affirmative, as that was a point necessary to be established before proceeding with the interview.

"Pretty well, are you?'

"Not very, I have a severe cold in my head;' and I sneezed immediately to establish my veracity beyond question.

"You don't say! Wall, now, I never! You've been kinder careless over there to Williamstown, hav'n't you? you'd better take some thoroughwort tea right away, to keep it from settling on your chist.'

"I wish it would settle on my *chist*, anywhere but in my head,' I responded, irreverently.

"That's wicked, Gideon; it might throw you into a consumptive. How do you like college? Awful strict over there, aint they?'

"Very.'

"Do tell! Phebe's comin' home pretty soon, I hear?'

"To-day.'

"Now, you don't tell me! They were a sayin' over to the post-office that there was a school-gal comin' along with her to stay a spell. I don't know what her name is? You'll be a sparkin' her up, I s'pose?'

"Not I. I'm coming home one of these days to marry Ruth Damon. Don't you think I had better?'

"Ruth Damon! Why, you must be crazy! She's older than our Mary! She's never had a bean since that fellar came up from Northampton in his antic horse and team and took her ridin'—and that was much as twenty year ago. You marry Ruth Damon! Well, all I have to say is, if you do, you'll make two shiftless couples!'

"I thought you used to say I bade fair to make a good husband.'

"I don't mean nothin' to the contra

of that now. But you and Ruth Damon could not get along together, I knows. Why, lands alive! she can't iron a shirt decent, and that's no character for a minister's wife. A poor stick you'd be a takin' care of an unpractical woman! You've been brung up too tender like. I always said so. You hain't got no better hands than a woman. I don't mean to say anythin' agin your mother, for she is master good if she is smart feelin'. We've got all over that grudge of ourn about her ketchin your father when he was as good as engaged to darter Mary. She didn't mean no harm, I s'pose.'

"See, how was that, Mrs. Cook?" I asked, although I had heard the story a score of times.

"Why, you see, your father was our minister's son! I held him in my arms when he was a baby, and seen him grow up around us. Why, we were almost as near kin as relations, because Captain Cook rung the bell for meetin' all those years that your grandfather Gildersleeme preached the gospel to us. Wall, as I was a sayin', when your father got to be tall and handsome like you here afore me, and went round a courtin' the gals, he was thought somethin of a ketch, and we reckoned a good deal on gettin' him into our family. He used to come a knockin' here Sunday nights and pretended it was to get the key of the church, but the Captain and I knew a thing or two, if he was so sly. Bime-by up come a school-gal with Fidelia Raymond, and every thing was all nip and pucker, and that was the end of poor Mary. She's been so heart-broke she's never encouraged nobody's affections since. I'm

afear'd you are agoin' to be took in just as your father was.'

"And then what will become of poor Ruth?" I replied, with mock gravity, as I lifted my hat and rode away.

"Dear Mrs. Cook! I shall always remember her. She was one of that class of women of whom a sample may be found in almost every New England village, whose business it is to find out everybody else's business, and who attend to their own business by minding everybody else's business. What she lacked in knowledge she made up in native inquisitiveness. She had a fashion of stopping passers-by, particularly young people and children, to ask questions and recite the latest news. It had been my favorite amusement to be thus arrested ever since I could remember. If she was not on the lookout, I usually coughed to attract her attention. Her quaint and original use of the English language was my especial delight. She had none of the cunning and sly malice of her neighbors, the postmaster and his wife, but garnered up every grain of information obtainable, added it to her stock in trade, turned it over and over, enlarged upon it, and scattered it broadcast through the town. She was to such a community what a daily newspaper is to a city, and about as reliable. Captain Cook (not the one who was killed at the Sandwich Islands) hoed his onions and cabbages in the little garden south of the house, and did duty for over half a century at the bell-rope in the vestibule of the white church, which had such an aristocratic way of standing on the side-hill by itself, and looking down upon its long rows of horse-sheds.

"My errand at the mill was quickly accomplished. As I came out upon the steps Prince sidled off, and the mill-boy ran to bring him back. Waiting there, I looked up at the eighty maple trees on the bank, between the road and the fence. How singular that they should be in pairs! From my point of observation they had the appearance of a boarding-school procession just ready for their morning march. They winked and blinked at me, and seemed to say :

'We know a story of long ago,
Which has rendered this spot famous.'

What, the old 'Mountain Miller' book! Who cares for that, or the spring where the good man used to drink, either! It was welling up though, cool and clear, from under the soft green shade, and I was thirsty. It would put that band of school-girls out of my head, perhaps, to take a drink. I stepped along nimbly to where I could rest my knee on a neatly contrived little bridge, a few inches in width, and, with the tip of my nose in the water, succeeded in obtaining the coveted draught. Upon the trunk of the tree nearest the spring were carved innumerable names. How charming to leave one's autograph to posterity, I thought to myself as I pulled out my pocket-knife and rudely cut my own.

"Prince had not been altogether pleased with the plan of carrying a bag on his back, and it took some time for us to convince him that it would not interfere with his future respectability, or prevent his moving in the best society, if he behaved himself. In the end I was conveyed home with exceeding celerity.

"I found my mother busy in the kitchen. I lounged in the parlor awhile,

trying to read. My eyes rebelled, and then I sat down at the piano and produced from it a few discordant notes. Finally, I took a turn through the garden, picked some syringas and bachelor-buttons and tried to construct a nosegay, but failed.

"Upon the other side of the street was a blank wall, below which was a steep grassy declivity, terminating in the bed of a babbling brook. Some years before I had chosen this site for the erection of a sort of study-house for myself. It was founded upon two rocks, one upon either side of the stream, and remained a mournful specimen of my boyish attempt at architecture. Going down to it for the want of something better to do, I found its outer wall desecrated by a huge placard—TAKEN. Dolefully as I felt, I could not help smiling, knowing that it was one of my father's innumerable pleasantries. I went in, and, seeing the old rickety settee in its accustomed place, I threw myself upon it in a half-sitting posture, with my head and feet well supported, and fell into a reverie, which ended in a nap, and the nap ended in the following manner:

"No. I will never marry a widower, nor a minister, nor a man with red hair. What a queer old shell this is!"

CHAPTER III.

THE VISION OF BEAUTY.

"THE speaker at that instant appeared before the entrance to my retreat, and paused, looking curiously into my face. It was a vision that came upon me like the glimpse of some better world, and

caused me to forget that I was made of clay. It was a slight, graceful girl, in fresh white muslin, with blue ribbons floating from hair, neck, and waist; ribbons that must have been selected to match her eyes, which were of a heavenly shade, more beautiful than any I had ever seen, and about her half-parted mouth a great many little lights hovered. Dear Helen, was not that enough to bewilder the senses of a susceptible youth just waking out of slumber?

"And now listen to what followed! Phebe discovered me in the same breath.

"Oh, Grandison! Mother said you were up-stairs asleep, and has kept us running round the house on tip-toe ever since we arrived. She says you are half sick. I should think as much! You *are* a pretty-looking youth! I should say you had been on a spree for a fortnight,' and then she walked in and kissed me in her old sisterly way, as if that could make amends for the suspicion she had cast upon my morals!

"I was furious, but hadn't vim enough to show it, and before I could have spoken, if I had made the effort, Phebe went on:

"My brother, Miss Everett, a miscreant who has seen better days.'

"And that was our introduction.

"I bowed stiffly as I rose from my ungainly position. My feet were so numb that I could not plant them firmly and thereby give myself a manly air. I could do nothing, in fact, but look very awkward and embarrassed, and, like the famous parrot, think a great deal without speaking a word.

"Pardon my intrusion; it was

wholly unintentional I assure you,' said Miss Everett, retreating.

"Yes, we came down here to read our love-letters and give the *dominie* season for repose, and have all unwittingly run into the lion's very den,' chimed in Phebe. 'But we will leave you to commence your dream just where it was broken off. Adieu.'

"And they were gone.

"I watched them through a big crack in my hermitage, as they wandered arm-in-arm along the vale, and finally ascended the bank and disappeared. An hour later the bell rang for dinner. As I came in sight of the house two pink-and-white clouds, with blue streamers, flitted through the doorway. The table was adorned with prettily-arranged bouquets of pinks, mignonettes, sweet peas, and roses. The visitor was placed at my father's right hand, and Phebe at his left. I sat under my mother's wing.

"Our house had a southerly front, and an unobstructed prospect of two or more miles of country scenery. There was a broad green meadow in the foreground, a grove of hackmatack trees—where we sometimes held picnics—just beyond, a saw-mill and two or three houses near the base of a hill in the distance, two brown cottages, about half way up, my grandmother's white domicile on the summit, and, a little farther on, the pretentious dwelling of Mr. Pinkerton, the greatest horse-jockey in the country. The fields in every direction resembled an irregularly-pieced patchwork bed-quilt, such a one as might have been produced in a sewing society.

"My mother left the door ajar to give Miss Everett a glimpse of this pretty

view, for she always argued that if people had fine tastes they ought to be indulged in them. The draft coming upon my back, through the same open door, made me sneeze. With my handkerchief doing duty, I pressed my fingers firmly upon my upper lip to prevent any further explosion. Alas! vain were my efforts. I sneezed again, got purple in the face, coughed, sneezed, cried, sneezed, choked, sneezed, and left the table without asking to be excused.

"My mother followed me to my room, bringing my dinner with her; but I had no appetite. She stroked my forehead lovingly, and laid a wet cloth across my eyes, then went down again. Phebe came up when dinner was over, and sat a half an hour with me. She chatted about the seminary, Lily White, Miss Jessop, the ride from Northampton, etc.

"It's awful provoking in you, Grandison, to go and catch such a cold just at this time. Your eyes look as if they had been soaked over-night in skim-milk, your face is swollen like a porpoise, and, in short, you haven't a good look left. Only to think! I've been boasting about your beauty and your fine manners for a year, and then brought my room-mate home with me, expecting her to be love-struck at sight, and you have gone and got up such a ridiculous first impression."

"Good heavens! quit your nonsense!" was my emphatic exclamation.

"Night came, and so did the doctor, for my father had great faith in the doctrine that 'a stitch in time saves nine.' After going through the usual ceremonies of pulse-feeling and interrogations, the man of the saddle-bags gave his

opinion and a prescription. My father gave him a dollar for each. But there was no evading the fever with which I was threatened. It was already creeping through every vein in my body. I did not stand upon my feet again for weeks. Verily I was at death's door, although at the time happily unconscious of my situation. My mother's gentle hands bathed my scorched forehead and cooled my parched lips. Not always. There were other hands that ministered to my necessities, and there was magnetism in their touch. I missed them when at intervals they smoothed not my pillow. I dreamed of blue eyes, fancied the skies were full of them, all beyond my reach, and I starving to death for the want of a pair. Then I was transported to a land where angels dwelt. I was carried there in a broken-down stage, with only three wheels, and people on the way laughed at my distress when I asked for a cushion for my head. All the angels wore white muslin, and the air was perfumed with new-mown hay. I was happy for awhile, particularly when my face was whisked with ribbons and my neck scratched with finger-rings. During one of my ecstatic moments I was precipitated into my little room in the college-buildings at Williamstown, and there found my bureau crammed with letters addressed to 'Miss Ida Everett,' and each letter contained a pair of ear-rings tipped with blue. There was no end to my vagaries. Sometimes I was riding Prince over a mountain of bouquets. At others trying to climb high places in pursuit of fairies. Then I took a prejudice to colors, refused to take medicine that was white, or green, or

red, or brown, or black, and my attendants were perplexed to know what to do with me. I did not look at it; I only asked what the color was. Finally, a sweet voice told me it was blue! After that I was satisfied.

"It was on a bright August afternoon that I opened my eyes, with my reason once more enthroned. My room was a picture of neatness and comfort. My eyes wandered from one familiar object to another, and fell at last upon a tiny glove on the foot of the bed. My mother was sitting by me and spoke my name softly.

"Yes, mother. I have been very sick, have I?"

"Her tears rained, and she kissed me tenderly.

"But you are restored to us again. Keep quiet now, and we will talk it over hereafter."

"My recovery from that hour was rapid. Yet, for many days, I saw no one save my mother and the physician. The house was still as the Sabbath, and I was haunted by a strange fear that my goddess had departed. One day I ventured to ask for Phebe. I had avoided her name hitherto, for a singular dread took possession of my soul at every approach to the subject, which was inexplicable.

"She is sick, dear."

"Very?"

"There are no alarming symptoms at present."

"Is it the fever?"

"Yes; but of a very mild type."

"Who takes care of her? You are always with me."

"Ida Everett. She is a most excel-

lent nurse for one so young, and what renders it all the more pleasant, she is devotedly attached to Phebe."

"Dear foolishness of mankind! How I was thrilled by the mention of that name! It was my private, very private opinion that the desire to hear it and know that its proprietor was still a dweller under our roof, had been preying upon my mind for a much longer period than I was even aware of myself. It was like some far-off pain suddenly bereft of its sting. I closed my eyes and remained silent for a time. My mother must have thought me asleep, for she quitted the room noiselessly. How long afterward I have no idea, but I was conscious of a presence, although I heard no sound. I raised my eyelids languidly, and all my faculties were at once plunged into a torpor of admiration! The young, bright creature, who had so moved my soul to its very depths, was standing before the mantel pouring something from a small phial into a tumbler. She wore a pretty French calico, made after the fashion of the period, and which seemed to endow her with a dignity, a softness, and a grace that all the panoply of feathers, silks, and flowers had failed to enrich any other lady of my acquaintance with. I could see her face reflected in the mirror upon the bureau, but she never once glanced toward me. I was as one dead, my breath held by an irresistible fascination, until, with the medicine in her hand, she had gone as quietly as she came.

"Then a profound calm descended upon me. The poetry of a whole life seemed to centre in one being. I knew she had been there before. The dream had not been all a dream. She had

helped to take care of me during the dark season when I was balancing between life and death. She had been witness to all my sick follies. Ah! what had she thought of me! Would she ever come to my room again?

"I asked this last question of myself over and over again during the long days of convalescence. But I opened not my lips to any living mortal. Of Phebe I heard encouraging accounts. The disease had touched her lightly, and the prospects were favorable toward her getting down stairs before me. I grew grave and melancholy. The doctor recommended change of air and scene as soon as I should have gained strength sufficient for a journey.

"One morning my mother did not come to me as usual; Mrs. Manning, a bungling, good-hearted neighbor, brought me my breakfast of toast and tea. I asked for an explanation, and was told that

"‘Mrs. Gildersleeve was busy just now.’

"I was restless and wretched, I knew not why. The atmosphere oppressed me, and I complained of cold hands. Mrs. Manning bustled about, doing nothing generally, and at last discovered that my feet were cold too. It had been a cool night, and from the south window a strong breeze fanned me. The doctor had been specific about it. I must not run any risk of getting chills. He had repeated the caution many times, for I was weak still. I asked for a shawl or blanket to be thrown across the bed, but, instead, the monster appeared with two bottles of hot water, which she insisted upon placing at my feet. I remonstrated

as vigorously as the circumstances would permit, but she said, ‘Well folks knew best about such things.’

"Perhaps they do, as a rule, but they don't always put their corks into their bottles tight enough, as I found to my sorrow, for in a few minutes the smoking contents were spread through the length and breadth of my bed.

"I raved. No school-boy ever called for his mother with more vehemence than I did for mine. I literally yelled. My persecutress tried to silence me, begged me to tell her what was the matter, offered to do any thing in the world for me, only not frighten the family; but, after using a good many adjectives not to be found in the catechism, I assured her that, unless my wishes were instantly gratified, I should arise and go to my mother myself. Then she disappeared.

"In the course of three or four minutes the door was pushed open, and Ida Everett stepped lightly into the room, came straight to my bedside, and taking one of my hands in both of hers said:

"‘I am so sorry for you, but you really cannot see your mother to-day. Is there any thing we can do to comfort you?’

"‘Why! What has happened to my mother?’

"A mortal terror seized me. My brain seemed to have taken fire. I was permeated as it were with an intuitive apprehension of dire calamity, and my eyes almost started from their sockets.

"‘She is not well, and I am requested to ask you to remain as quiet and as patient as possible. Mrs. Manning has volunteered to stay with you, and will do all she can.’

"No doubt of it, even to the filling of my bed with hot water. What ails mother?"

"She hesitated a second. There was truth in her sweet blue eyes, and she could not carry out the deception they had deemed prudent to impose upon me.

"I must know all. Is she dead?" The words oozed from my lips like blood from a poniard wound.

"She is."

"My senses seemed suddenly to desert me. I neither dreamed nor suffered. I had fainted away. When I again opened my eyes my room was almost dark, and my father was supporting my head in his arms. Some one administered a tonic to my lips, and I recognized the tiny, tapering fingers that guided the spoon. Then my memory returned, and I summoned all the forces of my will to speak. It was some time, however, before I could articulate a syllable.

"Forgive me; I ought never to have come into this room, for I might have known that I should have betrayed all at the very first questionings, and the shock has almost killed you," came from a low, choked voice near by.

"I struggled a moment for strength, then I caught the little hand which was now fanning me gently, and covered it with kisses. She drew it away, not hastily, and caressed my burning forehead, while my father sobbed like a woman.

"Tell me all about it," I stammered at last.

"She had been stricken with paralysis, and never breathed afterward, my precious, loving, darling lady, mother; and as I looked into my father's face I

felt that I should soon lose him also, for grief had crushed him. He had grown old, altered, frightful. His stiffened lips essayed to speak, but ended only in a groan. His eyes, which I had known as sending forth only flashes of humor and pride and love, were glassy and dim. His lips were pallid, and premature wrinkles had settled across his handsome forehead.

"I don't know how the story was telegraphed to my brain, or whose eloquence taught me to forget myself in pity for the strong, suffering man at my side. I wept bitter tears, but they were for his great, hopeless sorrow, and not for my own. All at once he looked down at me long and earnestly. Then he stooped and kissed me once, twice, thrice. The little act was in itself a volume, for I had never received such a caress from him since I had arrived at man's stature.

"You are very like her," he said.

"Good God, how his face lighted up! How splendid, how tender, were his eyes for that one moment! How much fascination in his warm, true soul, refined and elevated by such a companionship as had been his blessing thus far on the journey of life! How sweet and fiery with passion was his voice, and his submission! Did he deceive himself when he bowed his head and said solemnly:

"O Lord, our beloved Heavenly Father, thy will be done."

"Exhausted, I fell into a quiet slumber, from which I passed into a half-dozing, ecstatic state, more alarming than my previous delirium. My father's youngest sister, Aunt Sally, came and as-

sumed command of our stricken household, and devoted herself principally to me. The funeral was conducted so quietly that not a sound reached my ears, and only muffled footsteps and soft whispers rippled the air of my apartment for days afterward. Once more I almost bridged the chasm into the better world beyond the skies —— ”

“A whole sheet missing!” I had paused and been searching for it for some moments.

“What a shame! you must have misplaced it,” said Spicy.

“No.” And I made a careful examination. “It is positively not here.”

“How annoying! I want to know what happened next. If it wasn’t just about *ghost-time* I would go *spooking* back into that queer closet and see if I could find it.”

“You’ve quieted your conscience, then, in regard to the right and wrong of the thing——”

“No, indeed I have not. I am convinced, as I told you before, that we shall both be sorry some day for what we have done. But my curiosity is up, and that is my strongest point, you know. Besides, from the very first moment that I laid my eyes on them, it has just seemed as if those old letters had something to do with me. You needn’t laugh. I feel as solemn as Deacon Parson’s widow about it; and the notion sticks to me too.”

There was a knock at the door. It was Maggie. She had come to say that Miss Spicy’s room was ready. We both started up and went at once to see it. It was on the opposite side of the hall from

where we were, and over the library. It had an arched ceiling, which was tinted somewhat gorgeously, a continuation of the bay window with a reef taken at each side, and several small niches in the walls. The carpet was down and the bed was made; and Spicy’s trunks had been brought up.

“It looks as if I had always lived here,” said Spicy. “I wonder that *person* didn’t unpack for me, she seems to have done every thing else! Meddie, I am growing courageous—let’s go and hunt for that lost leaf.”

“Oh, no, not to-night. There is no gas in the closet, and I shouldn’t like to take a candle in there, even if I had one, which I dare say I have not.”

“I know! you are afraid!”

“Nonsense! you know better. I am entirely too practical.”

“Meddie, do you remember that burlesque concert we once attended in Maumee City, Ohio?”

“Yes. Why?”

“Don’t you know how every man out of twelve declared he wasn’t afraid of ghosts?”

“Well, what of it?”

“Sure enough, what of it? Why, when the ghost really came, the whole kit-and-dig of them lost their wits and scampered in every direction.”

“You talk as if there was a ghost coming here. I have no doubt I should quake if I stood face to face with one. But what is the use in wasting our breath on the subject when there is not such a thing as a ghost in existence!”

“May be not,” pronounced with a dubious inflection. “So we shall have to wait till morning to find out how the

minister made love! Oh, dear me! then I'll go to bed. Of course the lovely being took care of him, and consoled him, and he said all the sweet things in the English language to her, and there was an engagement, and a diamond ring, and a wedding — ”

“You forget that he was courting another lady, the one to whom this confession was made,” I interrupted her to say. Spicy had dropped into a little cane rocker, and was pulling off one of her boots. She looked up, with a half-comical expression, resting upon her pretty face:

“Then Ida Everett must have jilted him.”

I was standing with my back toward the door, which was wide open, and from the glass opposite I caught a glimpse of Nursy Brown, with baby in her arms, flitting from it, or perhaps by it; and, supposing she had come to speak to me about some household matter, I stepped out into the hall and saw her going into the blue room, to which I followed her.

“I have prepared the front chamber for you,” she said, “thinking this would be a more quiet place to leave little Bright while we are pounding and prowling about and nailing down carpets. I dare say you are tired enough to sleep anywhere, but he might wake and cry.”

“Very true.”

I stepped to the bed and opened it for her, and, after the little lump was deposited, I tucked him in and dropped a few kisses on his neck and arms.

“It is at the end of the hall,” said Nursy Brown, as, with my hat in my hand and my shawl thrown across my arm, I started for my new quarters.

It was the largest room on the second floor, and all my best bedroom furniture was there. It seemed so natural to have every thing in its proper place that I took it as a matter of course, and congratulated myself upon my orderly brain. That is, I knew very well that I had had no hand in settling things so speedily, but it was certainly creditable to me indirectly for keeping such efficient help.

I was soon sleeping soundly, and the night was wearing away. Having no care over the proceedings below stairs, I heard none of the noise and commotion. Nursy Brown had hired two or three extra hands on her own responsibility, and was pushing things into their places with a spirit and determination which were commendable, to say the least. It was four o'clock, as I afterward learned, when she went up-stairs to lie down. Myra and Maggie thought it would not pay for them “to go and undress just for two hours,” so sat down in the kitchen and laid their heads on the table. They said they had not been asleep, although I took their assertions for what they seemed worth, when they heard a piercing scream and a heavy fall nearly over their heads. They both ran up-stairs and found Nursy Brown lying upon the floor, apparently dead.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SINGULAR APPARITION.

I SPRANG to my feet at the first call, and, without stopping to throw even a shawl about me, ran to the blue room. If I had any definite ideas or fears it was that something had happened to my ba-

by. But he was sweetly sleeping on his pillow, happily unconscious of what was going on around him. It took me several seconds to recognize Nursy Brown as she lay stretched like a corpse before the bed. Her unbecoming cap and net had both been displaced when she fell, and a large quantity of rich brown hair had fallen from its close confinement. Her forehead, which I had never before seen, was classic, and all her features finely chiselled. Her hand, too, attracted my attention, it was so delicately small, and clinched fast within it was one of the letters with which we had been amusing ourselves during the evening, and which I had left scattered about in the room.

I knelt down by her and tried to raise her head with my hands. I blew in her face and screamed for the camphor bottle. Maggie, half-bewildered, tried to find it, and came running with a bottle of shoe-blackening. Myra arrived about the same time with a tumbler of cold water, and I dashed it into the pale face. She rallied, caught her breath, and languidly opened her eyes. In a moment after she spoke:

"Some one in there!" and her eyes directed mine toward the door of the wierd closet, which was slightly ajar.

"Who?"

"A woman! Oh, shut that door!" and she fainted quite away the second time.

I nearly drenched her with water, trying to restore her, and then with Myra's and Maggie's help lifted her upon the bed. Meanwhile somebody closed that closet door! There was no one in the room but Nursy, Myra, Maggie, and myself, and neither of us was within

four feet of it. There was no window open through which a draft could have been guilty of the act, and therefore I was led to believe that the place had an occupant. A sickening sensation came over me, and I could not see distinctly for a moment, although the gas was turned up so high that it roared. My next thought was of burglars, and I recovered my self-possession sufficiently to remember that they were cowards as well as assassins, and, while they might look hard at one woman alone, they would scarcely attack four.

"She was dressed in white," Nursy Brown said, as soon as she was able to speak again, "a sort of robe was thrown about her. She peered through the door a second time just as I began to tell you about it. I don't know why it should have affected me so, only that there was such a strange look in her eyes, and it all came so unexpectedly upon me."

"Maybe it is some of the old boarders coming back by mistake," said Myra.

"Why? did the folks keep boarders who lived here before us?" asked Maggie.

"Jest a few for company, so the old cook told me. She came for some aprons which she had left behind, while we were a movin' in yesterday. See! is it yesterday or to-day?"

"It's to-morrow! don't you see the shine in the east?" responded Maggie.

My nerves were fast recovering their usual tone, and I mentally resolved to make personal researches into the cause of the disturbance as the day advanced. Leaving Maggie and Myra in charge of Nursy Brown, I went to my room and dressed. My mind was full of

the strange occurrence, and I rejoiced that Spicy had not been wakened in the general excitement, as she was so timid and impressible, her faith in the supernatural would certainly have been established beyond question.

When I returned to the blue room Nursy Brown was sitting up, and her hair and cap were arranged as she usually wore them. It was light enough to see without the gas and the shutters were thrown open. Maggie had picked up the loose letters and, laid them in a chair, and Myra had gone down stairs to kindle the kitchen fire.

I took a seat and questioned Nursy somewhat further about the apparition, but elicited no new facts. She seemed greatly distressed at having caused such a commotion, and seemed wholly mystified in regard to our singular visitor.

"Come, Maggie," I said, starting up and approaching the closet door, "let's see who's in there."

"Oh, no! no! I couldn't look in there! I should fall dead—indeed I should! Don't make me!" and she turned very white.

I had forgotten how proverbially superstitious Irish servants are, or I should not have asked her.

"Never mind, I can go alone." I had my hand already on the door.

"I'll follow you," said Nursy Brown, rising with much difficulty.

"By no means, you must keep quiet," I said, taking hold of her and compelling her to sit down again. "Nobody is going to hurt me at this hour of the day. If they should attempt it, Maggie can put her head out of the window and scream for help;" and I laughed, although I did

not see any thing especially funny to laugh at just then.

"Wait, wait, let me call Myra. She isn't so bad of fear as me," exclaimed Maggie, running out of the room and down-stairs.

I was not sorry for the delay. It gave me time to reënforce my bravery, which was sadly on the wane. Who knew but there were concealed demons in that out-of-the-way place! I had read of haunted houses, and trances speaking, and automatic writing, and of the introduction of flowers and fruits into closed rooms, of voices in the air, and visions of the human body. I had always persistently laughed at the whole subject, but ridicule could not materially affect the actual state of things whatever they might be. No good thing, or great thing, in this world, was ever accepted or believed in at once. Christianity was not, the existence of a western continent was not, the use and power of electricity or steam were not; whatever was opposed to the experience of the vast majority of mankind was commonly rejected as incredible. But why argue? I was not going to harbor any hallucination. No, not I. My house must be redeemed from the shadow of a suspicion. I myself would march to the front or perish in the attempt.

Myra came up, but I could see that she had done it much against her will. Both of the servants looked anxious and careworn, and remained standing near the entrance to the blue room. I summoned my strength for a final struggle, gave the dreaded door a nervous push, it yielded, creaked a little and flew back to the very wall. There was nobody to

be seen, and there was no appearance of anybody's having been in the closet since Spicy and I left it the night before. After staring until my eyes ached, I wheeled about suddenly, and nearly over-turned my three companions, who, standing on tiptoe behind me, were looking over my shoulders.

"Perhaps some one has entered and passed out of that window?" suggested Nursy Brown.

I stepped down into the room and went and tried to open it. It was immovable. Indeed, as far as I could discover, there was no way of opening it. It was a little square sash with four panes of glass fitted into a plain pine casing. I was anxious to see what was below, and pressed my face in among the cobwebs to get a view. The slanting roof of the woodshed joined to the grape-arbor on the lower side stretched upward until within a foot of the window, so it would have been not only possible, but comparatively easy, for a person to have reached this point from the outside. But there was not the slightest evidence of its having been done. The ragged vines hung just where they did yesterday, and the rubbish in the room lay on the floor in the same corner where we had poked it over. One magazine, in particular, was open where I had looked at a picture, then dropped it for something else more interesting.

Nursy Brown had sat down on the steps, and her face was a positive study, although I was not sufficiently gifted to read it without a teacher.

Myra and Maggie looked at each other, looked into the empty room, looked at me, and breathed hard.

"What is all this rumpus about? Are you hunting for that letter so early?" asked Spicy, putting her head into the room, a head so ruffed and rumpled that it was quite apparent that she didn't take her hair off nights, as some ladies do.

"Bless your heart, there's been a ghost—"

"Hush!"

It was Myra who vouchsafed the information, and it was my peremptory order that interrupted her.

"A ghost!" Spicy clinched her hands convulsively and her teeth chattered.

"I told you so, Meddie!"

"You told me?" I replied contemptuously. "As for this ghost business, the least said about the better. I shall take measures to ferret out the secret, and until then I wish the subject dropped."

The last two sentences were intended for my servants' ears, although I was looking at my sister. They left the room soon after and went in silence to their work. Nursy Brown was very weak, and I helped her to the bed, where she laid down beside baby. Convincing myself that she needed nothing but rest and quiet, I threw my arm around Spicy, who was still in a violent nervous tremor, and led her back to her own room. She had learned so much already that I esteemed it the wisest course to give her a full history of the night's scare. Indeed, I could do very little less, she was so persistent in her inquiries. I sat upon the side of her bed, and she stood before the bureau putting up her hair, and taking it down again. Once or twice she laughed hysterically, but upon the whole sur-

prised me amazingly by the manner in which she listened to my recital.

"Only to think!" she went on to say, after I had finished, "what I was always most afraid of, I have come to at last! Just like Susie Wharton. Her besetting fear was of finding some one under her bed. All the while we roomed together at school she worried me to death ab outit, and, if she forgot to look under just the last thing before putting out the light, she would lie and quake and make me get up and do it for her. And sure as I live she found a man there one night! It was after she went home, and it must have been a great satisfaction after looking for him so long! How I laughed when I heard of it! Now I must write to her and tell her about my ghost. I knew it would come, and upon the whole I am ever so much relieved to think it is here."

"Spicy Merriman!"

"Yes, dear, that is my name."

"You are a perfect riddle! I never know what to make of you!"

"Is that so? then you had better let me see what I can make of myself. I am sure of one thing—I can't make my hair crimp this morning without entirely too much trouble. So up it goes plain. There! how does that look?"

"Very well."

"How do you know? you are not looking at it. Pray what are you thinking about? Is it the ghost still? I do wish I had seen it. Why didn't you call me?"

"The truth is, Spicy, if I had not seen that door closed myself without any visible agency, I should suspect the whole a trick of the imagination. Nursy

Brown was tired; she may have been asleep and waked suddenly; some jar on the street, or even on the railroad track, may have thrown the door open, and all the rest have been a distorted dream. The more I look upon it in that light, the more the theory gains foothold in my mind. Otherwise, some person must have been secreted in the house for no good purpose, and made his escape in a way not yet revealed to our perceptions."

"You are matter-of-fact enough to kill a saint, Meddie. It is ever so much nicer to call it a ghost, and tell our friends the house is haunted, and spirits of a highly-exceptional character are our daily visitors! and thus create an interesting sensation. Had I better put on my blue merino or my gray empress cloth?"

"Either. It don't matter. We sha'n't go out or see company to-day."

I began to feel sleepy, since there was no further occasion for energy and effort, and, pulling one of the pillows into position, fitted it to my head. When Maggie came to summon us to breakfast, an hour later, she found me in the apparent enjoyment of a comfortable morning nap, and Spicy would not allow her to wake me.

An unusually loud ring at the front door bell roused me about ten o'clock. Spicy and Bright were sitting in the middle of the floor, engrossed in the contents of my jewelry-box. The little fellow was ornamented from his head to his toes, and his incorrigible aunty was instructing him in the art of winding-up my watch.

"One of the moving-men says it was

a bad bill you gave him yesterday, and will you please change it?" said Maggie, after coming into the room guardedly, to see if I was awake.

"I did not give him a *two*!" I said, taking it into my fingers and trying to recall the exact circumstances when I paid the man. "No, it was a ten, and a five, a ten and two fives, now I have it, and he gave me back a two. I paid him for nine loads."

"What shall I tell him?" asked Maggie.

"That he is mistaken. He must have got it somewhere else."

A moment after I heard loud words in a man's voice, and Maggie's expostulating tones. The next I knew, the rascal stood before me.

"And is this the way you trate a poor working-man, to pay him in counterfeits! I'll have the ra-ul stuff afore I leave the house, so be a forkin' it out."

I rose to my feet and undertook to explain; but I was afraid of the man, for he seemed to be under the influence of liquor, and finally I retained the bill and gave him two dollars in gold.

"And it was ontirely too chape we moved ye anyhow. Could ye be after giving me a little change for a glass of beer?" he went on as he wrapped the money up in a piece of dirty sheepskin.

I caught his glittering eyes fixed upon my baby and his surroundings, and I trembled. It was a trifling thing in itself, but I had occasion to remember it afterward.

"Shall I call William to show this man the way down stairs?" exclaimed Spicy, springing up and coming forward, with her face very much flushed.

"No, you needn't ever mind about it now, miss. If you want to be so mane as not to pay your honest debts, lit it go, lit it go, I'll give it to ye;" and he blundered back the way he came, and we heard Maggie lock the door after him.

"Well done, Spicy! What a brave girl am I! How about your William?" and I laughed.

"The old nuisance! I couldn't stand it any longer. How quick he budged when he thought we had a man among us! A house full of women are a helpless set anyhow, and, if I were a robber or a thief, I should do just as they do, pounce upon every one I heard of. Say, Meddie! let's send for cousin Phil to come and sleep here, nights. I know he would just as soon, he never has to stay at the bank evenings. He might have that little room at the head of the front stairs."

"He could not have that room, for it is the best suited for Nursy Brown of any in the house, and I see she has all her things as well as baby's already in there. But if it is best to send for him, and I begin to think it is, I could put him in the blue room."

"Capital!" said Spicy, "And we won't tell him a thing about the ghost until he has tried it one night."

"What's the use in telling him at all?" I asked.

"Oh, there wouldn't be any fun in keeping it to ourselves all the while. May I write to him a note, or go for him?"

"Neither. I will send Maggie. I want you to stay with Bright, for I suppose Nursy Brown is laid by, and my head is aching fearfully. I have had too much excitement."

I declined breakfast, went to my room and shut myself in alone. I dozed a little, but I was in too much pain to get any sound sleep. Myra came up with some tea about noon and kindly urged me to drink it, which I did, and felt much better for it. She didn't leave immediately, but stood first on one foot and then on the other, and finally wound her hands up in her apron.

"I think I shall be goin' about the time my month is up," she at last stammered out.

"Why so?" I asked, quietly.

"Because my aunt is sick and wants me to come and stay with her a spell," she replied, looking at the carpet.

"Oh, very well, Myra."

It has been a principle of mine for many years to treat my servants well and pay them well, but never to ask them to stay with me after they have expressed a desire to go. Hence, there was nothing more to be said on either side. Her month would not be up for a week yet, and I should have an abundance of time to find some one else for the position. Spicy found me in the rocking-chair when she came up from lunch. My first inquiry was for Nursy Brown.

"She is better, and won't let me have the baby any longer. She has sent for some oysters, and ordered Myra to cook them for you."

"I don't care for them. I am not in the least hungry."

"But you will be; you know what Owen Meredith says:

'O hour of all hours, the most blessed upon earth,
Blessed hour of our dinners!

The land of his birth;
The face of his first love; the bills that he owes;
The twaddle of friends, and the venom of foes;

The sermon he heard, when to church he last went;
The money he borrowed, the money he spent;—
And many more things a man may forget,
And not be the worse for forgetting; but yet
Never, never, oh, never! Earth's luckiest sinner
Hath unpunished forgotten the hour of his dinner!"

That is what I call practical sentiment, Meddie. He says something more, I don't quite remember how it comes in, about,

'Indigestion, that conscience of every bad stomach,
Relentlessly gnawing and pursuing with some ache,'

and then another pretty idea:

'We may live without poetry, music, and art;
We may live without conscience, and live without heart;
We may live without friends; we may live without books,
But civilized man cannot live without cooks.
He may live without books—what is knowledge but grieving?
He may live without hope—what is hope but deceiving?
He may live without love, what is passion but pining?
But where is the man that can live without dining?'

I suppose it will apply to woman just as well, only I don't quite subscribe to the idea that a man, or woman either, could live very long without love."

"You have managed to exist a little over sixteen years without it, haven't you?"

"Not a bit of it! don't I love you, and — well, I might get up a book on statistics; but there come your oysters! let them shut your month, and don't bother me."

"How would you like to read to me for awhile?" I asked, as I submitted to the temptation in my way and found my appetite increasing fast.

"That is just what I am dying to do. I am at your individual service. I have those letters in my pocket, and although I have hunted high and low, and cannot find the remainder of the one you were reading last night, I've struck another.

mine, and it is the grand sequel! Pray listen with all your ears."

She changed her seat so as to get a better light upon the close writing, and read as follows:

CHAPTER V.

THE MINISTER AND HIS DEACON.

"MY DEAREST HELEN:

"The history of an unspoken love is, at the best, a spiritless feast, and it is only to correct false impressions that I have entered so minutely into particulars. Now I will give you a better seasoned dish.

"It was on a sultry June evening that I stood on the steps of my little church in Peculiarville waiting for Deacon Wilder, who usually walked up the street with me from the prayer-meeting. He came bustling along presently, slipped his arm through mine, and we proceeded leisurely on our way.

"Where do you propose spending your vacation?' he asked, in a confidential undertone.

"I am haunted by the blue hills of Massachusetts,' I replied. 'I have not seen them for two years. It is my present intention to visit a sister who has a cosy nest in among their fastnesses.'

"It is very cloudy, very cloudy this evening,' remarked my companion, with the air of a man whose thoughts were on some other subject.

"Yes, deacon. I apprehend showers before morning.'

"H-e-e-e-m, yes, very. H-e-e-e-m, by-the-way, Brother Gildersleeve, have you ever considered—h-e-e-e-m—how—

hem—how much more useful a young man—h-e-e-e-m—of your cloth might be in our parish if—h-e-e-e-m—if you were to take to yourself a good, pious, exemplary wife!'

"This was hardly what I expected from him. I smiled, and looked full in his face.

"Excuse me—h-e-e-e-m—I have a slight cold this evening. It was only our great regard for you that made us talk this matter over—h-e-e-e-m—a few of us, and I was appointed—h-e-e-m—to call your attention to the subject. There is no one in our little place whom we could select—h-e-e-e-m—as a suitable companion for you; but—h-e-e-e-m—Deacon Tomilson's wife's niece is coming to visit them, and we should very much like to have you make her acquaintance.'

"Thank you, sir,' was my quick response; 'but I have no disposition to marry—none whatever. Say so to my kind friends. If you wish to install a minister's wife over the Church, I will abdicate any moment you may desire, and thus give you an opportunity.'

"My impetuosity must have astonished the good man. He stammered in his attempt to apologize. I came boldly to the rescue.

"I fully appreciate your motives, Brother Wilder. Such thoughtfulness is eminently characteristic of my warm-hearted and zealous supporters. Matrimony, however, is a subject upon which I rarely permit any one to speak to me seriously. I received a bruise in my younger years which has never had time to heal. I always expect to labor single-handed in the vineyard of the Lord.'

"Then I suppose—h-e-e-m—that I must report the failure of a bungling ambassador," said Deacon Wilder, shaking my hand warmly and bidding me good-night.

"And he did. Not only that, but his wife whispered the news, that Mr. Gildersleeve had been crossed in love, to every lady member of my church and congregation, and that he had positively declined to make the acquaintance of Miss Helen Hortense. You were entirely innocent of any part in the plot, and might have been spared their idle tattle. But, as it is, you shall have the whole romance, and then execute judgment.

"The following week, on Tuesday, I found myself one cloudy afternoon standing on the little platform of the station-house at Clover Glen. It had grown into quite a pretty village since I was last that way. Paper-mills, woollen-mills, balmoral-mills, cotton-mills, warp-mills, and other kindred establishments, were flourishing in every direction. Two or three churches had gone up like sky-rockets, and cottages, large and small, and white and brown, and Gothic and plain, were scattered without regard to streets, wherever there was a good place to build."

"I suppose," said Spicy, pausing and looking up at me, "that they laid out the streets to suit the houses, as I once bought my dress to match my gloves."

Then she read on:

"There were pretty yards tastefully cultivated, and plenty of yards uncultivated, simply serving as pens to catch the dirt in, and there were mountains set up all about like a wall of protection

against the wiles of the wicked world and the fresh summer breezes.

"With my valise in my hand I walked leisurely up the main street, hunting for a house with two wings, as the residence of my sister Phebe had been described to me. All at once a hand was laid upon my arm, and a voice exclaimed:

"Grandison! by Jove! How came you here?"

"It was my brother Fred, my junior some four years, as I presume you are already aware. He gave me half-a-dozen slaps on the shoulder, and shook my hand until the joints cracked like castanets.

"By rail—and you? I thought you were coining gold on Wall Street! I am proud to hear that you are developing quite a remarkable talent for business. How is Phebe?"

"Tip-top. Why didn't you announce your coming? She would have killed the fatted calf if she had known it. As it is, she has nearly killed herself getting ready to engineer a pleasure excursion to Gray Lock to-morrow. We start at five o'clock in the morning."

"I intended to have written, but I was uncertain about the date of starting until the last minute. However, I am agreeable to Gray Lock, if you will take me along. I should like that trip above the clouds; it will remind me of by-gones."

"We had by this time reached the house, and I was received by Phebe most affectionately. Her home was a little gem of comfort. I had not seen another such since dear old Rockland Place passed out of our family possession. She was blooming as a rose, and emanated sunshine whichever way she turned.

"What a windfall you are, Grand-ison, just at this particular time!" she said.

"Which, interpreted, is to say, that, as soon as circumstances will permit, she will be much obliged to these two members of the masculine persuasion if they will walk into the kitchen and help her make sandwiches until sunset," remarked Fred.

"No, indeed!"

"Yes, indeed! What is the use in denying it? You know you sent me to the grocery for some tongues a short time ago, and ordered me to make all possible haste, because, you said, there would be hardly time to get every thing ready to-night anyhow. I am not going to spoil a story for the sake of a minister. Besides, he is old enough and big enough to work, and your old adage applies in his case—"a certain amount of misery is necessary for the enjoyment of life."

"I immediately expressed my extreme willingness to cut meat, butter bread, pack chicken, or eat cake, as the master of ceremonies should direct.

"The master is a mistress," said Fred.

"I corrected myself accordingly.

"Phebe declared the picnic was of no such vital consequence. She wanted to sit down and talk with me. But Fred wouldn't let her.

"Business first, and then pleasure," he said. "When one is in an official position he must face his obligations. Such honors are cheap at that."

"The facts of the case were that Phebe, and one or two young lady friends, had projected the expedition, intending that it should occupy two

days, remaining on the mountain all night in order to see the sun rise. About seventy of the villagers were enlisted, and a party from Williamstown were to join them on the mountain. Each individual was expected to carry a basket; and for the general dinner and breakfast supplies were sent to Phebe's kitchen, and some colored men had been hired to carry them up on their backs.

"Fred was in his element. Nothing ever suited him half so well as a frolic. He was a handsome young man of the world, prided himself upon his fine forehead, brown wavy hair, and bewitching eyes; was tall, well built, a perfect athlete in his movements, and having earned the unenviable reputation of lady-killer, was nothing loth to play a few pranks for the benefit of the country damsels whom he might meet on this eventful occasion. He was the most helpful of helps during the afternoon and evening, and laid the good things into baskets according to the latest prescribed rule. I stood by and did the looking on, and encouraged Phebe to let those who would work do the work. Her husband, Richard Haywood, arrived from Boston on the eight-o'clock train, and entered into the arrangements with great spirit. Some young ladies came in to discuss questions of policy and performance, and loitered long enough to flirt a little with Fred. I heard him wickedly suggesting to one of them to try to catch that 'red-headed old bachelor,' meaning your humble servant.

"So you have commenced making game of me already?" I remarked, after they had gone.

"Who ever knew a Gildersleeve who

could not fight his own battles?' was all I got in reply.

"The morning was fair, and the procession was under way at the appointed hour. I was not more than half awake when we took our seats at Phebe's breakfast-table, but I remember distinctly every good thing upon it—coffee, hot rolls, fried ham, and cold mush. I complained of a fair appetite, considering the hour. The truth is, I am an advocate of sleep. My advice to young people (of all ages) is, to get all they can. Never mind that old-fashioned doctrine about early rising:

'Thomson, who sung about the seasons, said
It was a glorious thing to *rise* in season;
But then he said it—*lying*—in his bed
At ten A. M.—the very reason
He wrote so charmingly. The simple fact is,
His preaching wasn't sanctioned by his practice.

'Tis doubtless well to be sometimes awake—
Awake to duty, and awake to truth;
But when, alas! a nice review we take
Of our best deeds and days, we find, in sooth,
The hours that leave the slightest cause to weep
Are those we passed in childhood, or—sleep!

"'Hallo,' said Fred, when the springless wagon which was to convey us to the base of the mountain stopped before the door. 'There are just six of us officers, and as the vehicle has three seats, then, according to Colbourn, we must ride two on a seat. Dear Mrs. Haywood, may I have the felicity of riding by your side?'

"I fancied there was more than one pang of disappointment when the sister thus carried off the star of the morning; but I made my best bow and handed in Miss Emily Juniper, who maintained great dignity in her gold-bowed glasses and faded hair. Brother Richard had a nice sociable time on the front seat with Katy Sparkle.

"The road was dusty and rough, and mostly up-hill. We stopped every few minutes to let the other wagons overtake us. At a pair of bars opening into a bleak pasture we alighted, and sent the wagons back to the village. From there we walked a good half-mile to the foot of the modest old mountain, the highest in the Bay State, and which needs but a Bryant or a Bierstadt to render it famous.

"Meanwhile the sun was high enough in the heavens to pour down its scorching rays. There is a remarkable spring just as we enter the woods, and we all stopped to drink and fill our canteens. From that point the ascent was toilsome, and before we were half way to the summit our water failed and we were nearly famished with thirst. There were covetous eyes fixed upon some tin pails which formed a part of the luggage, and, at one place where we stopped to rest, there was a mysterious silence prevailing for a time among the gentlemen. All at once the startling rumor floated through the air that the pails contained nothing.

"There was a panic, to which the recent stir in Wall Street was a mere bubble. The lady managers of the dinner looked at each other in hopeless despair.

"'What shall we do?' exclaimed Katy Sparkle, pulling off one of her green-kid gloves and pushing back her flaxen ringlets with her bare hand.

"'Is it possible! no milk at all for our tea and coffee!' ejaculated Miss Emily Juniper, looking over her glasses.

"'We had a six-quart pail of pure cream!' said Phebe, regarding me with interest as I martyrizd myself by car-

rying two waterproofs, three parasols, a pair of overshoes, and a cane.

"Well! It is what I call a little worse than stealing sheep!" remarked Richard, as he worried along under the weight of a folded tent.

"I wish I knew who did it!" whispered Mrs. Cady to Mrs. Puttywell.

"So do I! It is mean! contemptible! despicable! selfish! sneaky! outrageous! Mrs. Haywood went all over the village to collect it, and I put in every bit I took from yesterday's milk. I wish I could just get hold of the person who dared to steal it!" said the latter in an emphatic manner.

"What is up?" cried Fred, overtaking us.

"Katy Sparkle explained.

"I thought as much," he replied. "I saw brother Grandison drawing his head out of something very like a tin pail. I heard you talking rather loud up here ahead of me, and, thinking I could shed a little light on the subject, I put to the rescue. Say, look a here, man!" and he confronted me, taking hold of my coat-collar on either side of my neck and nearly shaking my wits into next week, 'What did you drink that milk for?'

"It was not a very nice position for an orthodox minister and the editor of a leading religious paper to stand thus accused before a band of strangers!

"Answer me!" he thundered, giving me another tremendous shake. 'What did you drink that milk for?'

"Because I did not know any better."

"What had I said! How could I have been so absurdly stupid as to confess to the doing of such a deed! Could

I recall my unfortunate words? Should I be believed if I did recall them?'

"Come this way," said Richard shortly after. 'There are some Pittsfield ladies to whom I should like to introduce you.'

"I was glad of an escape from an embarrassing predicament, and followed him at once. Imagine my confusion when he presented me, with all due formality, as 'the man who drank the milk!'

"I scarcely heard my true name again that day. My two brothers had an endless amount of fun at my expense. After reaching the top of the mountain we rested ourselves for a season on the soft side of flat rocks, and then the more active and ambitious of the party made preparations for dinner. A fire was built, water prestidigitated by the colored boys, tea and coffee made, and sundry bits of cooking done. I amused myself with a small telescope, tracing out the White Mountains in the distance, Mount Monadnock to the right, the Catskill and Adirondacks to the broad left, and hills upon hills, picturesque valleys, and gleaming lakes in the immediate foreground.

"It was four o'clock P. M. when I was escorted to a tent and placed at the head of a sumptuous repast, Turk fashion. Fred was high chief waiter, and a bevy of pretty girls followed in his wake. Everybody was in a merry mood, and the good things disappeared swiftly. I was favored with some strong black tea which I could not drink without my usual trimmings, and the first I knew I was laid violent hands upon, and the vile stuff was poured down my throat as if I were a small child sick with the measles

and would not take my medicine. Then, I was toasted as *the man who drank the milk*, and was obliged to respond with a speech. I was pestered, and persecuted, and laughed at. But, strange as it may seem, the ladies ceased to regard my crime with horror and aversion, and vied with each other in their kind attentions to me as the affair obtained publicity.

"‘Were you accustomed to drinking milk in your boyhood?’ asked Mrs. Puttywell, with an expression of great interest on her face.

"‘Yes, I was brought up on a farm.’

"‘That accounts for it, then—your liking for it now. But I can’t see how you could manage to drink so much!’

"Neither could Katy Sparkle, nor Mrs. Cady, nor Miss Emily Juniper. The latter looked concerned, and asked me twice if I was quite well.

"‘Habit, habit,’ said Richard; ‘if he had only had a Rev. Mrs. Grandison to have gone through life with him, he would never have got in such a way.’

"‘Nor worn that happy and serene look and leghorn hat,’ said Fred, flourishing his black beaver.

"It was my turn to speak after a while, and I challenged Fred for a story. He was a capital story-teller.

"‘Won’t do it unless you will answer a question which I am going to propound.’

"‘What is it?’

"‘Why have you never married?’

"‘For two reasons—both good ones. Because I had an idea that I shouldn’t like to see my wife make a beefsteak answer for two meals, use the fragments for soup the third day, and manufacture hash out of the remains all the rest of the week,

and my parish never voted me salary enough to provide more liberally. And, secondly and lastly, I have not succeeded in finding the lady who had the three qualifications I require.’

"‘Only three! Pray do tell us what they are!’ cried Katy Sparkle.

"‘Good sense, good humor, and good health.’

"‘What a combination of excellences!’ said Richard.

"‘No wonder he is a single man!’ said Fred.

"‘Not even an eye for beauty! ah, Grandison!’ said Phebe.

"‘Fulfil your part of the programme now,’ I said, addressing Fred.

"We made him stand on a stone to entertain the company. He did so, and his humorous description of a recent robbery was very enjoyable. A gang of desperadoes had planned and executed an assault upon some unprotected property, and so successfully had it been accomplished under the very eyes of a crowd of people, that the offence rested only upon the head of one man, and he innocent!

"‘Brother Grandison!’ said he, in conclusion, ‘since you have had the credit of the sin and none of the cream, I must admonish you, in the presence of all these witnesses, to remember the good dog Tray.’

"In the midst of the laughter that followed, we saw the Williamstown party coming over the brow of the hill from the west. A committee went forward to greet them, and there was quite a stir all round. The Clover Glenites separated into select little groups sitting on the grass, and under the dwarfish shrub-

bery. I returned to my telescope and sermonized a little.

"A lady and gentleman, sauntering along, stopped directly in front of me. The latter was a scholarly-looking man, advanced in years, with snowy hair and a gold-headed cane. The lady was young, of a light, graceful figure and stylish air. I could see only a portion of her face, which was of marble whiteness, but there was a world of quiet strength in the curves of her well-shaped mouth. She wore a gray travelling-dress of some summer fabric unrelieved by even a bow of bright ribbon. She was saying to her companion:

"With trouble we acquire strength, uncle. I am equal to any course of action which my better judgment approves. I have not yet had time —"

"She turned partly round at that moment, and the words seemed to freeze to her lips. Her eyes were riveted upon me! And mine? Need I say more, than that I stood face to face with Ida Everett!

"In the life of every one, I believe, there are sudden transitions of feeling which seem almost miraculous! As if some magician had touched the heavens and the earth, the dark clouds melt into thin air, the winds are hushed, and serenity succeeds the storm. Looking into her eyes and seeing myself mirrored there, all my doubts and misgivings vanished. It was a brief, blessed interchange of soul with soul. Why, oh, why had I been so foolishly false to the promptings of my heart in those far back days? Why had I housed up the love that wellnigh consumed me, let the golden hour of promise pass, suppressed

the longing cry that was on my lips, and erected a barrier of ice over all my finer and better feelings? Inexplicable folly! I might have known that she was mine, and captured the flying years. It was perfectly clear to me now. How could I have been so mistaken, so misguided? Certain thoughts are prayers. There are moments when the soul is kneeling, no matter what the attitude of the body may be. Ah! my love was taking shape and form, and I took her outstretched hand.

"She introduced me to her uncle, Judge Shubill, and we chattered pleasantly, all three of us. Phebe coming that way, was thrown into a great state of rejoicing by meeting the dear friend of her girlhood, whom she had not seen since she graduated. Richard following, was introduced, and joined our party, but Fred was more agreeably occupied elsewhere. We found seats on the rocks and settled ourselves for a talk. We exhumed Rockland Place and painted it up in fresh colors. We wandered through the fields and meadows and picked clover-blossoms and dandelions. We visited North Pond, that unique body of water on the top of a high hill, and picked huckleberries in a row-boat. We took drives after the horse that always shied at white paper, and had two or three upsets in rough places by way of a reminiscence. We dissected the good people of the neighborhood, laughed over Mrs. Cook and the captain, and the post-master and his wife, and went to church on Sundays, and held full-dress receptions while the congregation gathered. Sadly and tenderly were spoken the names of my father and mother, and loving allu-

sions made to their many virtues and accomplishments, and their better home in the spirit-world. Kind words! Heaven-born immortalities! Their influence is stamped upon the future when the past has sealed the lips which uttered them. Let them live on forever and forever!

"Strange freak of fate which had thus thrown me into the magnetic presence of the woman whose image I had been trying to tear from my heart for so many years! My ears were tingling once more with the music of the voice which had taught me the lesson of life in a new rhythm! and oh, how greedily I caught every pearl which fell from her lips! As in those early days she charmed by entering entirely into the moods of those about her, drawing forth by her genial appreciation their best gifts, and rendering them entirely at home with themselves; as in her daily life then, so in her conversation now, she displayed singular sweetness of temper and forgetfulness of self, combined with fine intuitive perceptions; and I, who had been groping so stupidly in a labyrinth of error, emerged into a mysterious alchemy of light, with newly-awakened perceptions. I had suddenly found myself in the attitude of a man impatiently waiting for the right moment when he could do homage before the world to the woman of his choice.

"Meanwhile another banquet had been preparing for the more recent comers, and the judge and his niece were led away, promising to meet us again in the evening. Phebe had duties that required her attention, and excused herself, saying:

"Richard, it is a good time for your

cigars while we are getting the tents spread and candles lighted.'

"True,' and he started to get them.

"The boxes were not where they had been left. He instituted a search which occupied some moments. Finally, some one spied them partly covered by the leaves in a little hollow of earth. But the fine havanas which they had contained were not to be found.

"It is those darkeys,' he said, scowling and shaking his head.

"They were sitting in a row under a little pine-tree a few rods below us, apparently absorbed in viewing the landscape. He stepped lightly over the bank and called out:

"Peter!

"Yes-er,' and in the flash of an eye the boy stood up and faced about.

"Did you take my cigars?"

"Nos-er, never touched a cigar in my life.'

"What! don't you smoke?"

"Nos-er, never smoked a cigar in my life.'

"How is that? don't you like cigars?"

"Don-nos-er, never smoked a cigar in my life.'

"His hands were behind him, and at that instant a stream of fire shot up in the background and singed both his hands and his hair. He jumped into the air with great, dilated eyes, and then wailed and agonized over his smarts.

"So you never smoked a cigar in your life, eh?" said Richard, with his eyes resting upon the poor stump of one which had done the mischief.

"Ohs-er, I'll never steal another cigar, never, as long as I live! Ohs-er, I'll

never steal another cigar! my hand! oh, my hand!' and he blew and shook the unlucky member. 'Ohs-er, I'll never steal another cigar as long as I live!'

"We could none of us restrain our laughter, and the old mountain resounded with the uproar. The fire, meanwhile, which had kindled in the dry grass and stubble, crept along aided by the wind, and assumed a serious aspect. There was no water to be had, consequently we did battle with stones, moss, and dirt, and in the end conquered. But the moon was up and the wee small hours approaching when we buried the hatchet and smoked the pipe of peace once more. The laborers were served with refreshments by the ladies of the committee. One of the Williamstown ladies brought me a cup of coffee, and described something to me while I drank it, no doubt very interesting, but spoken in what seemed a lost language. I was thinking about Ida Everett, and wondering how I was going to get an opportunity of seeing her before the party retired to the tents. We were standing in front of one then, with its great blank black eye taking in every thing, and giving out nothing in return, save the dim length of vacant space. I looked at my watch by the light of a feeble lamp, which stood inside a pail. There are moments with rusty, broken locks, which refuse to open to the crowding joys that wait beyond. This was one. I returned my cup with suitable acknowledgments. Then I reached up and cut a branch from one of the trees to keep off the musquitoes. I watched a shadow coming toward me—no, it was a form clear-cut and presently distinct in outline. A faint rustle

of drapery, a light foot-fall, and then the words:

"'Oh! Mr. Gildersleeve! I hardly knew you in the dark!'

"I was intoxicated with delight. The hour longed for come at last! And with it the feeling—which all men know—that it was the one jewelled opportunity which must not be allowed to escape. I offered her my arm for a brief turn over the scarred, seamed rocks to the region of the late fire. There followed winged moments. I told her all. She tried to interrupt me, but I would not permit it. It was an earnest, sincere outpouring of the pent-up love of years. And I made her listen, listen to the end, although she let go my arm and sobbed convulsively.

"In the light of the new moon, which was shining over my shoulders and full in her face, I stood with folded arms waiting her reply. I could see pity flash from her drowned eyes, and then a hot carnation scorch up the tears from her cheeks. Twice she essayed to speak, and hesitated, painfully; then, gathering strength and growing calm and cold in her demeanor, and planting each word like a sword thrust through my heart, she said:

"'Of course you are ignorant of the facts—how could you know them? I have been married two years!'

"In order, I suppose, to relieve me from any further embarrassment she abruptly bade me good-night. I never saw her again. I hardly know the hours were passed until we returned to Clover Glen. I remember but indistinctly the surprise and regrets of my sister and brothers when I announced my intention of going to Europe for a

six or eight weeks' trip. They knew nothing of the pain I was seeking to dislodge.

"I cannot tell how long it was before I was able to say: Welcome, disappointment! thy hand is cold and hard, but it is the hand of a friend! I have taken sorrow to my heart, made it a part of me, and nourished it until it has made me strong again. The setting of a great hope is like the setting of the sun. But the brightness of life is not gone. There is darkness for a season, and then light illumines the eastern horizon and we live again.

"I was sitting in my room before a bright, blazing fire in the hotel of the Piazza del Popolo at the foot of the Pincian Hill in the Eternal City, when the letter of Deacon Tomilson, enclosing your picture, reached me. I glanced at the strange Italian fireplace which allowed so much heat to escape up the chimney; at the curious andirons—miniature sphinxes crouched with serene faces amid the flames; at the ceiling, with its half-classic, half-grotesque frescoes, and at the water-basin and pitcher set in a frame resting on a tripod, while my thoughts went back to sacrificial fires. Then I studied the pretty, interesting face on the card before me, and evil whisperings in my ears suggested *sacrificial fires*.

"That night my pen traced the few lines that set afloat the rumor that I was about to resign my charge in Peculiarville. If to return was to meet you, I felt that I could not return there. But gradually I became more self-contained; change of scene, as well as time, conduced to the restoration of both mental

and bodily health, and when the earnest appeals of an attached people reached me on my homeward voyage, I had no language at command wherewith to refuse.

"We met, dear Helen, and I have learned your worth. The future is in your hands. My heart is all laid bare. I have kept nothing back. Perhaps we shall yet discover that between a perfect friendship and a perfect love there is a fainter distinction than many people imagine. May you be guided in all wisdom, and may Heaven's choicest blessings rest upon your head, is the sincere prayer of
G. G."

CHAPTER VI.

SPICY'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

"I WOULD like to wring that man's neck!" said Spicy, throwing down the letter impatiently.

"Why so? The matter seems to have regulated itself as such matters do, and, while there was much to be regretted, I don't see that, under the circumstances, there was anything that could be helped. If the lady Helen saw fit to take him, I have no doubt he made her a good husband."

"Oh, dear, yes; I suppose likely, being as—

'It is man's philosophy
When woman is untrue,
The loss of one but teaches him
To make another do.'

But he no need to have been so unreasonably selfish as to have wasted all this immense pile of French paper talking about his own love-affairs, and dropped his brother Fred like a hot potato! I was just getting interested in the young man, and never stopped reading when I

got hoarse and my eyes smarted, because I thought I was going to get another full-length view of him! My heart is dead broke!"

"It is too bad! Perhaps you will find something of him in the other letters."

"No, I guess not. I am in total despair. They look like regular engagement missives from beginning to end. Here is something about a ring, and a little farther on they are going to the city to buy traps for house-keeping. They are coming back the same day, so Peculiarville isn't far from New York. Then they are going to have some new Venetian-shutters on the little white church, which is just beyond the covered bridge, and a new carpet for the minister's pew. But never a word about the glorious Fred! I wonder if he went to the wedding! I wonder if he does his nice brown hair up in curl-papers every night to make it wavy!"

"You must keep an eye out for him when you go to New York in the fall."

"What advice for a sister to give! Me do such a thing as that! What do you suppose would become of me if I was to try it? I expect, as long as I am in Miss Gilbert's boarding-school, that I shall be required to shut my eyes every time I go in the street, and march with a teacher on each side of me. I like him though, as near as I can get at him. I must go back and read it over, what his brother says."

"Meanwhile I will go down-stairs and inspect my whereabouts, for I am like a stranger in a strange land. I have given the subject so little attention."

"Your head is better, is it?"

"Yes, indeed. I am almost as good as new."

I went to the parlor first, a square room with a large window on each of three sides, and was not a little surprised to find it in perfect order. The carpet was my old medallion, and must have fitted pretty well, save a portion cut from the length. The piano stood "on the bias," as Spicy would say, across one corner of the room, and the large sofa was its *vis-à-vis* in the same position across the other. The easy-chairs, and the tables, and the ornaments, were arranged in the best possible good taste, and the effect was so inviting that I took a seat. The only incongruity that glared upon me in my pleased frame of mind was a plain iron gas-fixture with two arms, one of which pointed toward a sweet, pensive, mellow landscape in oil, by Inman, which hung over my elegant bronze clock on the mantel, and the other preserved a threatening attitude in the direction of the front window.

The little entrance to the parlor from the street was an oblong space about four feet by six. A door opened from it also into the library, a smaller room than the parlor, and which communicated with the latter by another door beyond the mantel. I found this looking even more attractive than the parlor, although it accommodated very much less furniture. My books were lying on the floor in the curiously constructed bay-window recess, for the want of a case, otherwise every article had struck an attitude, and the grand whole was kindly suggestive of family circles and winter evenings.

The dining-room was just beyond,

"all hunka-deri," Spicy had said, when I had asked her, in the morning, of its welfare and general appearance, and from it a door led into the great north hall, at the left of which was the kitchen. I was particularly struck by the number of closets and pantries which burst upon me from every nook, and corner, and turn, and which are of such immense use for storing surplus goods. I was not at all surprised either to find them filled, for I remembered my nine loads of yesterday.

Nursy Brown was in the kitchen looking over the silver. She was pale, very pale, and looked wan and weary. The faintest shadow of a smile played round her lips as she expressed the hope that I was better. I tried to put into proper phraseology my grateful acknowledgments to her for benefits received, but my words seemed meaningless and fell, like dead weights, far below their aim. I believe I hinted at some possible reward for her valuable assistance in so many and unexpected ways; and then I wished I had not said any thing, for she was all at once invested in a halo of superiority which I could not fathom, and my remarks were evidently distasteful to her. She gazed through the window with a strange, stunned quietude, a sort of dead apathy, and had the bearing of one upon whom fate had spent its last blow. I had never observed her so closely before, or had this change come over her recently?

I inquired after Bright, and found that he was asleep. I discussed the family bill of fare, sent Maggie for Cousin Phil, and wrote some orders for the

butcher and the baker and the grocer. Then I examined the fastenings of the windows and doors, and at last visited the blue-room, to which I was followed by Nursy Brown.

"I have driven a nail into the window-sash in the closet for additional security," she said, "although it seems perfectly impregnable without it."

"A wise precaution," I replied. "I wish we could fasten the closet door, too."

But that was not so easy a matter. There seemed to be no good place for a lock, although we found afterward that the putting of one on was not an impossibility. Nursy Brown quite agreed with me in thinking it best not to apprise Cousin Phil of our strange experience of the previous night, but to be ready to run to his aid should we hear the slightest alarm.

"Of course nothing will happen," I said.

Phil came about eight o'clock. He was a natty, lively fellow of two-and-twenty, of a tallish figure, quite stout and firmly built, and passed for a much older man than he really was. He had a fine voice whenever he chose to air it, and was admirably educated on at least three musical instruments. Spicy opened the piano, and fresh, animated, and amiable, the two sang and played until I warned them that my hour had come for retiring.

"I wish you would let me sleep in your room," said Spicy, opening my door a crack and whispering through it, just as I was ready for bed.

"Come in. What is the matter?"

"Nothing yet. But I think I could

entertain my ghost better if I was not quite alone. I am not the least bit brilliant, you know, and you could nudge me with your elbow and whisper something in my ear to say, if my vocabulary failed."

"Then you propose having an interview, Phil to the contrary notwithstanding."

"That is my present expectation. So I may stay, may I? Thank you. Now I am going to name my bedposts, and get into bed backwards without speaking a word, so as to have my dreams come to pass. See, bedpost number *one* shall be Fred Gildersleeve; bedpost number *two*—well, I guess I will name it Fred Gildersleeve too; bedpost number *three* shall be Fred Gildersleeve to keep the others company, and bedpost number *four* shall be Fred Gildersleeve, to make the number even. Now, don't disturb me after I've said my prayers."

I was greatly diverted by her ludicrous endeavors to climb over the foot-board in the manner specified. And then I tried to induce her to break the mystic charm by answering some trivial questions, but she turned her face to the wall and her silence was a success.

I did not fall asleep readily. I heard the cars come in train after train, and people were driving on the avenue very late. The air was warm and sultry, unusually so for that season of the year, and I heard an occasional rumble of thunder. It stormed at last. I could feel the wind jarring that part of the building which I occupied, and the rain beat against the windows. Then it subsided, but occasionally my room was illumined by a vivid flash of lightning,

and there were ominous roarings among the branches of the trees in the yard.

Was that a step in the hall?—like some one blundering in the dark! My head was raised from my pillow, and my ears keenly alive. Some one at my door! Yes; the latch was moving, stealthily moving—it creaked a little, for it was old and worn and unoiled. The door was opening slowly. It was too dark for me to see it, but I knew and felt it all the same. A white figure approached the bed.

"Who is that?" I had just barely strength to gasp.

"Me, ma'am," was the prompt reply, and never was the broad Irish accent more acceptable to my ears. "Oh, Mrs. Belmore, this is the dreadfullest house I ever seen! We shall all be murdered; there is ever so many robbers down stairs!"

"What!—what do you say?"

I sprang up in great alarm.

"They've tried our window and got it wide open, and Myra and me both seen 'em in the lightnin'. Then we seen another man before the glass window, when we was runnin' through the north hall, and there was a big rattle in the dinin'-room like as if there was a lot of 'em in there. Myra has gone to hide in Nursy Brown's room, and I've come here."

I was at the bureau by that time, and having drawn a match across the sand-paper we were relieved of the murky darkness, if nothing more.

"Stay here, Maggie, and I will call Phil."

I threw my wrapper about me and ran into the hall, but stopped to light the

gas there before I went on. Phil was sound asleep, and I knocked three times before I got an—

"Ugh—ugh—what do you want?"

"Please get up quick and come down stairs with me. There is somebody in the house."

I stepped along to Nursy Brown's door, and found the gas lighted and the baby awake. She was trying to quiet him, so I did not go in. At that moment Phil put his head into the hall, with his hair standing up straight like a drove of porcupine quills.

"What is up, Meddie?"

"That is what I want to find out. Make haste!"

"I will be on hand in a second."

I ran back to my room and brought a candle which I always kept there.

"Got a sledge-hammer, or a pop-gun, or any thing dangerous?" he asked, as he sallied forth equipped even to his boots.

"We will go down the north stairs," I said, ignoring his sarcasm.

"What! You going with me to keep me from getting hurt?"

"Yes, or for any other good reason you may be pleased to give."

"So be it; but let me take the candle," and he preceded me.

In the centre of the kitchen he stopped and faced about.

"Meddie, please tell me what we are looking for?"

I repeated the servant's story to him, and we went on through the laundry to their room, which opened out of it on the ground-floor. Sure enough, the window was open as Maggie had said, and the end of a broom-handle, cut to fit, supported it!

"They first put a knife up between the two sashes and sawed off the miserable old fastening," said Phil, after examining it carefully and closing the window, without seeming at all startled by the circumstance. "However, they must be half way to Calumet by this time, so we needn't have any more fears to-night."

I told him I should like to have a nail put in, but he found that the broom-handle would do just as well, being the same length as the upper sash, and resting upon the top of the lower one so firmly that it could not be moved. We went through the lower part of the house, which was undisturbed, and we presumed the burglars, finding themselves discovered, had beat a retreat without making any further attempts to enter. Phil offered to sit up until morning if I wished it, but it seemed quite unnecessary, and he went back to his room. I stepped in to see Nursy Brown, who was lying very white and still beside my baby, holding one of his little, pincushiony hands in her own. Myra was sitting in a high, straight-backed chair by the table, and looked as if she was just about to set out for the gallows.

I told them the result of our explorations and the conclusions to which we had arrived. Myra shook her head:

"It is the dreadful house, ma'am! It will kill me. I cannot stay another night, indeed I cannot. They's been all over it. I seen 'em in the dining-room, and right up here in this very hall I put my hand on one when we was a creepin' away to save ourselves. He had a skin like a snake, and it was all greasy like, and his eyes rolled at me," and she put

both hands over her face and drew short, sharp breaths.

Free as I have always been from superstitious fears, I sincerely believe that if I had heard that speech twenty minutes sooner I never should have gone down-stairs. But, as it was, I had been over the infested ground, and was satisfied that the whole disturbance had proceeded from natural causes. I tried to imbue Myra with my own opinions, but she was obdurate.

"Them's no robbers," was the summing up of her expressed belief.

I went to my room and found that Spicy had not waked. Maggie, worn out with fatigue and loss of sleep, and probably quite relieved from any sense of danger while under my immediate protection, had curled herself up on the floor, laid her head on a chair, and gone to the land of dreams also. I could hardly make up my mind to wake her and send her back to her room, scared and trembling as she would naturally be, under the circumstances, so I let her remain until morning. I got a little sleep with the gas shining full in my face, for I hadn't the courage to turn it out, but it was in snatches and not at all to my satisfaction.

Maggie went down quite early, soon after daylight, but I suppose she talked over the affairs of the night with Myra before she went about her morning work, as it was nearly eight o'clock when she went to the front-door to put out the mat and sweep off the stoop. The next moment she came running up-stairs, out of breath:

"Mrs. Belmore! Mrs. Belmore! The front-door has gone and been left open all-night!"

Did we look to that when we were running about the house? I strained my brain to remember. Surely not. We did not go into that little hall-entry at all. The robbers must have gone through the house and out that way.

As soon as practicable I hurried down to learn particulars. Maggie told me how she found the door standing, and I traced large, muddy footprints on the floor of the painted veranda.

"Poor fellows! they have had all their trouble for nothing! They got frightened away before they had a chance to steal any thing!" I said.

"They'll come back, I suppose," replied Maggie, with a mournful cadence.

Something like a shriek caught my ear at that moment, and I flew up the stairs much faster than I had descended them. The door of Spicy's room was standing open, and she in her night-clothes was holding to the latch for support. I stood there too—for full five minutes without uttering an exclamation. The sight fairly struck me dumb.

"Put on your clothes, deary. I want to call Phil to see this," was my first remark.

"I will go back to your room. I am sick," and, bursting into tears, Spicy disappeared.

Nursy Brown came out of the nursery when I called Phil, and, as he had finished putting every particular hair in its proper place, he was ready to respond immediately.

"Where's the show?" he called out.

But it was not so far off that he needed a guide. Nursy Brown had already stepped into Spicy's room, and we followed closely in her wake.

"Ginger! that is rather rough! By George, what a knife! They were no myth after all, were they, coz? Have you found out what is gone?"

No, I had not got so far. It had been sufficient for me until now to see what they had left. Tumbled bureau-drawers, wide open, the contents of overhauled trunks scattered here and there, chairs lying on their backs as if in consequence of a hasty exit, and a horrible knife several inches in length, and with two sharpened edges, standing upright on the floor near the bed, where it had, no doubt, been dropped accidentally!

"I don't know what Spicy had to tempt the miserable thieves—not much money at any rate!" I said, stepping along and taking a more careful survey of her upper drawer. "Queer that they should have aimed for this room! If they had fallen upon mine they would have got a better haul, or even downstairs, where my silver is stored!"

"What is this?"

Phil was pulling something from under a pile of clothing on the floor. Alas! it was my jewelry-box, bottom upward, just as it had been thrown down and — empty!

Spicy had brought it from my room yesterday morning to amuse the baby with, had thrown the treasures back into it carelessly and set it on a chair, and forgotten all about it as the other events of the day crowded themselves upon her notice.

Poor child! She was sobbing most piteously upon my bed with her face buried in the pillow, when I went for her.

"Never mind, deary, don't feel so; come and tell us what you have lost," I said, kissing her.

"What I have lost! it is what you have lost through my heedlessness that I care for! If I had put that box back where I got it, as I intended to do, or if I hadn't touched it in the first place, this would not have happened. Oh, Meddie! your beautiful watch that Leonardus gave you on your wedding-day, and those precious charms, the very greyhound that the Pope blessed, and such a chain! I am sure there never was another like it! And your pearls, which I have always taken such pride in seeing you wear, and if there ever was one thing I wanted more than another it was to have just such a set for a bridal present; and your solitaire diamond, and the garnet set, and those buttons, the last gift of dear papa, and the rings which I taught little Bright to call *stars*, and he spoke it almost as plain as I do this minute! Oh, dear! dear! dear! it was all my fault! what shall I do! what shall I do!"

"How do you know they are all gone? there has been no search made yet! Every thing is upside down in your room. Perhaps we shall find them, but you must come and help, because it is your things that are tumbled about."

"It is no use. I feel it in my bones. The moment I looked in that door it all came to me. How that old *scalawag* eyed the jewelry when he was bothering about the bill, and how I did not have the sense to put it away! I suppose the knife was to have done me if I had been there to make a noise! Oh, dear! dear! dear! I should have deserved my fate;" and her distress was not to be soothed

by any words of mine just then. Meanwhile Nursy Brown had gathered up Spicy's disturbed possessions and hunted in vain for the missing valuables. The robbers had got what they came for, and left all the rest. Spicy's dainty little watch was still under her pillow where she had put it before coming to my room the night before, but her pocket-book had been taken from her bureau. The only smile which lighted up her tear-stained face that day was when reference was made to the latter:

"How they will be sold! It has only ten cents in it!"

There were a good many footprints in the soft earth on the garden side of the house, and upon close examination we determined that no less than three persons had been prowling about the premises during the night. The other end of the broom-handle was under the servants' window, where it had been cut off and thrown into the grass.

"That huge old knife did good service," said Phil, as he picked up the evidence of its work.

One of the men we tracked through the north gate of the grounds, and another through the front. Phil got a pair of scissors and a paper, and tried to take a pattern of the footprint of the latter. He succeeded partially, and sent Maggie up to Spicy with it to inquire what number she thought that man wore for a boot! Then he seemed to be following a trail through the rear part of the yard, and came back quite excited.

"It is a woman's foot as sure as you live!"

I could hardly credit the statement, but in one place near the grape-arbor

the impression was perfect, and I was of the same opinion as soon as my eyes rested upon it. And a very delicate little foot it must have been.

"Here is where she climbed over the fence and escaped into the alley."

"I must find out what it means. I will set detectives at work," I said, excitedly.

It was long years, however, before I did find out what those woman footprints meant. Within an hour the chief of police had all the details of the robbery, its possible bearings, and suspicious connections. I was convinced that my old moving man was at the bottom of it all. Yet the catching of him was quite another thing, since Maggie had picked him up that eventful May morning, on the corner of some street, she could not tell where, and of course nobody could tell whither he went. But the property was of such a nature, and could be so easily identified, that I had great hopes of its being eventually recovered. I was philosophic and even cheerful under the loss, for it might have been much more serious, I reasoned. I endeavored to comfort Spicy whenever I could find a moment to spare, who was blaming herself continually, and declaring that she should never be willing to look Leonardus in the face again. Indeed, she reiterated all the old threadbare superstitions she had ever heard or read of in regard to the losing of wedding finery, and seemed to think she had committed the unpardonable sin by being accessory to it. As a final resort, I turned her thoughts into a new channel by asking what she had dreamed about Fred Gildersleeve, after all her trouble.

"Bless your heart, I thought he turned up in the ghost-closet, out of the blue room! He was dressed in ridiculous short-clothes and knee-buckles! He shook his finger at me just as Paul Gibbon used to do when he was superintendent and I did not behave in Sabbath-school, and said I should rue the day I ever touched those old letters! I tell you, Meddie, as I told you in the first place, that they are certainly mixed up with my destiny somehow! I don't believe it was right to find them!"

"That is a new way of putting it. We found them by chance."

"Well, then, I wish we had never moved here. There is a fatality about the house, I am sure! See how much has come to pass since day before yesterday!"

She was going back upon the old subject, and the tears were pouring. I insisted upon her dressing and practising over some new music, while I went out to hunt for a cook to fill Myra's place.

"Can't you coax or hire her to stay until the end of her month, as she first talked of? Oh, she does make such nice apple-pies, I hate to have her go!"

"I have my doubts about her ever having made an apple-pie in my house!"

"Who *has* made them then?"

"I suspect Nursy Brown has been the fairy who has coaxed our appetites to such an extraordinary degree. It is very stupid in me not to know any thing for certain, especially about what is going on under my own roof, but there never was any such house-keeping or cooking before she came, and it has been so agreeable to me since that I have let it take its own course."

"I should give it all up to her and let her engage the new cook, then, if I was you."

"Oh, no! I must preserve my dignity as the head of the family. Besides, I don't pay her any more wages than I should an ordinary nurse-girl, and, for that reason, I couldn't ask her to shoulder any of my responsibilities. What she does of her own accord I appreciate, but I am actually afraid to offer her any compensation for extra favors, lest she take offence and vanish out of my sight."

"She must do things for the very love of doing them, I should say, then," replied Spicy, as she bathed her eyes at the washbasin.

"More likely to occupy her mind. I have known persons busy themselves in ways as uncongenial as possible, in order to dull the sharp edges of some great sorrow, and I am beginning to think such may be the case with her."

"Have you got any room you would like me to sweep and dust?" asked Spicy, turning round suddenly, with her eyes full of soap, "because, since it is my special aversion, it might tend to ameliorate my misery."

I laughed, and stepped out to look over the balusters to see who had just rung the door-bell. It was one of the detectives in pursuit of additional scraps of information. I met him in the parlor, and we talked a few minutes, closing the interview by entering into an agreement to have the house guarded for a night or two.

Then I put on my hat and shawl and gloves, and went to the intelligence office. There were no cooks in; I never went there when there were any in. But

the woman in attendance, Mrs. Bates, promised to send me one before night.

In accordance thereof, there was one reached my door before I did myself, a buxom, rosy-faced, well-dressed-in-pink-muslin Irishwoman of forty or more years. She had a good, but badly-spelled character, written on several separate and distinct slips of paper. She informed me that she had always lived in the *very first families*, and, as for her skill in the art of cookery, she knew how to do every thing "illegant."

"When can you come?"

"I am come now, if you please, ma'am."

"I mean, to stay? Don't you want to go after your clothes?"

"I've got clothes on, ma'am, as is good enough for anybody's house."

"I thought they were too good to do your work in, and presumed you had others?"

"So I has. But I can go for 'em in the evening."

"What is your name?"

"Ann, if you please, ma'am."

"Well, Ann, I hope you are not easily frightened, for we've been having robbers in the house."

"No, not at all, ma'am. They had 'em where I was last."

"They got in through the window in the servants' room, but I have taken measures to have it made as secure as possible since."

"Oh, I don't mind. They have often got into my windows."

"You are probably not afraid of ghosts either?" I thought it best to sound her on every point.

"Not the least of a bit, ma'am."

"And you are quite prepared to go

into the kitchen, and take off your bonnet and help get the dinner?"

"I are."

"Come this way, then."

Myra was on her knees by the kitchen stove, basting some chickens which were sizzling and sputtering in the oven. She rose to her feet, and confronted the new-comer with flashing eyes.

"Here is your successor," I said.

"Take courage, you will not have to sleep in this dreadful house again."

"Seems to me you are in a mighty hurry to get rid of me! I ain't going to be sent off so!"

"You gave me notice that you should leave to-day."

"But you needn't a-been so glad like. It's more'n flesh and blood can stand, when I thought so much of the baby, and Miss Spicy, and General Belmore, and have taken such an interest and worked so hard a-movin'!"

"I am sorry, Myra, but you have it as you wished. Please show Ann where the things are, and tell her all about the *hobgoblins*, and then come to my room and get your pay."

Maggie was setting the table in the dining-room. She was quite composed, not having been as terror-stricken at any time as Myra. We learned afterward that she had had much less occasion, for Myra, in trying to find Nursy Brown's door, had run straight into the arms of one of the midnight marauders.

"You will get more than you want of that cook-woman afore you get through with her!" were Myra's last words to me, as she shrugged her shoulders with a dubious insinuation.

That night passed quietly, and each

member of the family rose next morning greatly refreshed. Phil had cracked a good many jokes over the police guard, told me that lightning was never known to strike twice in the same place; but, upon the whole, I think he was glad of the arrangement.

Spicy was late to breakfast, and, when I sent out for an instalment of hot rolls and coffee, I did not get it. Maggie seemed unwilling to tell me why, but I drew it out of her. The cook had put things all away and washed the coffee-pot, and said to Maggie:

"Go 'long, I'm not going to have one meal bothering round until the next one is ready."

We exchanged a few significant glances, and made the best of the situation.

She understood her business, that feminine monster, who had usurped such high-handed rule in my establishment, but we all kept out of her way. The delicious dinners and lunches and breakfasts, and the snowy kitchen, and the shining tin, and the perfect order that reigned supreme, reconciled me to many of her ways; but I was far from being comfortable. Spicy said to Phil:

"Sister Meddie never dares to drink two cups of coffee now, for if she sends for more she is liable to be discharged."

One week, two weeks, and yet no clew to the robbers! I grew more and more philosophic, but Spicy's bursts of grief and self-reproaches were daily food. She was too light-hearted to pine under the pressure of the misfortune, but she could not banish it from her mind. Phil had picked up the ghost story, and thought it a capital joke.

"She'll have to hurry up if she is going to pay me a visit before I go to Detroit," he said, one evening.

"And when may that sad time arrive?" I asked. "We have got so used to you, I don't know how we are going to spare you."

"I shall get off about Tuesday next, Providence permitting."

He had been offered a better position in a Michigan bank, and had accepted.

"We shall miss him; but then we are not as timid as we were, and Leonardus will be home for a few weeks before a great while," I said to Spicy.

"I had just as soon he would go as not. He is only a lay figure anyway. All he does is to laugh at us when there is any real danger. And, to tell the up-and-down truth, I am tired of his perpetual ding-dong about *Spicy's ghost*," she replied.

"What an inconsistent young lady! Not half an hour ago you were begging him to stay."

"Complimentary, purely. One must pamper a man's vanity a little. You know that as well as I, Meddie."

The night after he left, I went to the blue-room to get an extra pillow for Bright. I lighted the gas, drew down the window-shade and gathered up some newspapers which were scattered. One of the arms of my cane-rocker was missing, and I searched for it until it turned up from behind the bureau. Then I discovered the handle gone from my decorated china pitcher, and after much ado all to myself I extracted it from the washstand drawer and stood holding the dismembered part in my hand, full of vexation, though not able to pin the

guilt of the accident to any one in particular, when, suddenly, a gust of damp night air chilled and startled me, and, turning quickly around in the direction of the closet-door, which had silently swung open, I encountered the black, piercing eyes of a tall, sickly-looking, thin-visaged woman, in a singularly-fashioned robe of white, more nearly resembling a counterpane than any thing I can name, and while my heart was struggling for room to turn over in my throat, and my blood was leaping through my veins with telegraphic velocity, she slowly receded from my sight and disappeared altogether!

CHAPTER VII.

SPICY'S COURAGE.

"AND you think she was really a live woman, do you?"

It was Spicy who asked that question, and it was I, lying on my bed, who replied, with an effort:

"Certainly."

"Then what did you go and do such an absurdly silly thing as to faint away for?"

"I can't explain. We have had considerable stir and excitement of late, and I suppose I am nervous, like womankind in general."

"What was the color of her hair?"

"Dark, or black. She reminded me of a Southern lady I once knew. I wish I could have had strength and presence of mind enough to have followed her and unravelled the mystery."

Oh, Meddie! I am glad you didn't. She would have beguiled you into some

cranny or other, and that would have been the last of you. I wonder she didn't gobble you up as it was! But, say, did she look unhappy, as if she was tired of roving about between heaven and earth, without any husband or home of her own, and in such queer clothes?"

I smiled.

"She looked very sad and a trifle wild," I replied.

"I see! There is only one way in which I can ever arrive at the minutiae of the case for certain, and that is by interviewing the ghost myself. I believe I will get big Ann to sit up with me some night and watch for her."

I smiled again, and very incredulously.

"You had better."

"Don't be sarcastic, Meddie. Perhaps you think I don't dare? There is one thing about it, the ghost and I would have a great point of attraction, for we should both be afraid of Ann."

"Spicy, you are the oddest bundle of contradictions that it was ever my lot to meet! Would you really and truly and deliberately station yourself in the blue-room, with only Ann to protect you, and await the coming of our queer visitor?"

"I believe I would," and there was meaning in the twinkling of her pretty eye. "May I buy up Ann with a bottle of whiskey?"

"No, that would be hardly safe. But you may promise her an extra five dollars when I pay her month's wages, if you wish."

"You give me full permission to make arrangements, do you?"

"Yes."

I had very little faith in her carrying out the daring project. It was not equal

to the original grain of mustard-seed. I knew how easy it was to plan and talk and get ready, and even fight with an invisible foe, but my late remarkable experience had taught me the fallacy of all self-measurements and human calculations when brought to the unwelcome test. I was anxious to have the problem solved of who or what manner of person or spirit was thus intruding upon the privacy of our little home, and why she came and gazed in upon us, and went away again giving no sign! But I did not esteem Spicy the proper one to fathom the secret, and I did not believe she would make the attempt. She was buzzing about all day, and several times alluded to her night's undertaking; said Ann was willing. She believed Ann was rather predisposed in favor of ghosts. I spoke to Nursy Brown about the freak which Spicy had taken in her head, and asked her if she thought I had better forbid it.

"Oh, no; if no good comes of it, no harm more serious than a scare will be likely to befall her."

In the early part of the evening Spicy told me that she and Ann were going on duty as soon as the yeast came for the breakfast muffins. She had put on a little red jacket, embroidered with black, and her dainty curls, dressed with far more than her usual care, were floating over her neck and shoulders. Her cheeks were glowing, and her eyes were sparkling with eagerness and expectation. She was more lovely than I had ever seen her before, and I was giving her an affectionate mental embrace when Ann put her head through the door.

"I are ready, miss."

"Have you been in the closet during the day to assure yourself that the window is perfectly secure?" I asked.

"Yes—yes, indeed!" replied Spicy. "Nursy Brown and I have been like two revolving lights ever since early in the morning. There isn't a sign of a place where a body can get in or out. I am going to put a lighted candle in there for the ghost's convenience."

"What shall you do first if you see any one?"

"The dear only knows! But I sha'n't fall down as you did, for one thing. I guess I shall say—'Good-evening, and how are the folks at home?'"

"I shall feel of her, and see what she are made of!" spoke up Ann.

"That is right, and don't fail to find out where she goes, too," I said.

"I sha'n't lit her go at all, onless Miss Spicy tells me to," continued her cookship.

They started on their way, and I heard Spicy saying in the hall:

"Now, Ann, you must not go to sleep. You know it is a part of our contract that I am not to give you a penny if you shut your eyes once, except to wink."

I wished I had been able to have gone with them. I asked Nursy Brown not to go to bed, and to look into the blue-room once in a while.

It was so still in that part of the house as the hours slid away that I concluded they must all be asleep, and, at last, getting more aroused and apprehensive, I got up and stood at my door and listened. Finally, I determined that it would not do me any more harm to go and see, than to fret and worry without

knowing. Nursy Brown was in her rocking-chair reading a new magazine. I passed by and peeped into the blue-room. Ann sat in a chair by the bureau, with her eyes fixed on the closet-door, and Spicy lay on the bed looking at Ann. They both saw me, and Spicy put her finger to her lip to warn me not to speak. She smiled while doing so, but the dimples at the corners of her mouth were expressive of high excitement rather than merriment.

I returned to my bed and it was not long before I slept quietly. How long I am unable to say. I was wakened by a laugh that sounded like a chink of silver dollars. No one who knew my sister Spicy intimately would be at a loss to know from whence it came. I started up, threw a shawl round me, and went to the blue-room. Not a soul was there! Frightened, I stepped along and looked into the closet which was open! There stood Spicy quite alone intent on the examination of an old daguerreotype by the dim light of the candle. It was not in a case, and upon the back of it was pasted an autograph. She looked from the picture to the name, then to the picture again, revolving the two back and forth before her eyes, entirely oblivious to my presence until I spoke to her. And even then she could not seem to disengage her thoughts sufficiently to reply.

"What is it?" I asked, the second and finally the third time.

"It is —"

But she got no farther, and still seemed to be lost in astonishment, or in some great absorbing study.

"Let me see."

And I stepped down beside her.

"Ah! a young man! rather good-looking, too! Nose decidedly Roman. Standing collar. Hair parted in the middle."

She turned it over and I read the name.

"FRED GILDERSLEEVE!"

"Where did it come from?"

"It was on the floor just where I stand! I hit my foot against it and stooped and picked it up!"

"And you had been in before, and it was not there then?"

"No. The floor was clean as Ann's kitchen table."

We went back into the blue-room, and under the gas, with our heads rubbing against each other, gazed into the honest, pleasing face that was returning the compliment with spirit.

"How happened you to go in the closet?"

"Oh, I must tell you all about it. You see Ann was so prodigiously courageous that I didn't have much faith in her. It was getting so late that I had made up my mind we should have no adventures to entertain you with in the morning, and I thought I would have a little fun all to myself, trying to see how much the old cook would bear. So I pretended I heard footsteps going up and down in the closet. She looked wild, and opened her mouth and eyes. Then I whispered and asked her to open the closet-door and let the poor ghost in, so that we could get through and go to bed! You ought to have seen her teeth chatter! And such an awful look as she gave me! And then she got pale, and her eyes bunged out, and the big flat bow she wears on the thin spot (top of her

head) fell off, and she stretched out her hands as if she was going to swim, and began: 'Oh, fauther, and-hauly mother and the blessed virgin, presarve us!' and it was so comical to me, for I hadn't heard any noise in the closet, and then she stammered, and choked, and gurgled, and cried 'go-go-go-go-away;' and I was so intent upon seeing the end of her *conniption*, or whatever it was, that it never for a moment occurred to me that there was any thing else to look at, until she ran from the room, and I laughed! Then I moved my head, and lo! the strange woman, or ghost, which you and Nursy Brown have described, was standing in the closet-door! I sprang from the bed and put my foot through my hoop, and tripped, and floundered, and was so long in recovering my balance that I failed to see her ladyship home. When I got to the closet there was no one there, and nothing to be found but this picture? Meddie, do you believe in witches?"

"No. I have not much belief in any thing just now, and what I have is unsettled. Were you not frightened at all? You seem to have deported yourself with great coolness!"

"Oh, as for that, I felt a little squeamish in the beginning, but it is not half as bad to face a danger on your own responsibility as it is to be pitched into it by somebody else. It is like my fidgeting everybody, and the driver in particular, when I ride after a frisky horse. But out at Aunt Minerva's, last summer, I not only drove her runaway Dick to all points of the compass, but I often actually harnessed the old, cross, biting beast. Last week, one day, I was riding in the

omnibus on the west side, and almost got the *highstrikes* because the horses kicked up. So you see it would not be safe to count on my valor. It comes and goes. As for the ghost, I was disappointed. She did not come up to my mark at all. She wasn't dressed pretty, had no white sheet about her; her garb was plain black! If my eyes served me right, the bottom of her dress was all mud. I do wish she had not been in such a hurry."

"Did she make no noise whatever in her exit?"

"Not that I can complain of. I made some, though. I spilt Phil's cologne bottle on the table and smashed it. I have not looked after the pieces yet, but I guess they will keep."

"Let us go and examine the window once more, Spicy."

"What, the one in the closet? agreed," and away she tripped.

It was fast. Our combined force could not shake it. The mystery deepened, and could not be explained away by any possibility. And the picture, springing upon us in such a singular manner, added to our mystification. True, it might have been among the rubbish in connection with the old letters, but not very probable, because, if so, why did we not find it before? or how could it have moved itself into the place where it was discovered?

"It makes me think of my dream," said Spicy.

"I wish you would step and ask Nursy Brown for a shawl, I am getting chilly," I said.

Spicy obeyed, but was back presently.

"Where can she be? She is not in her room!"

"Not in her room! The baby's there?"

"Oh, yes, as sweet as a dumpling."

"Then she can't be far off. Look in the bath-room."

It was at the end of the hall close by where we were standing. Spicy pushed open the door, and, instead of Nursy Brown, there was Ann, counting her beads!

"You are a great one! Who did you leave to take care of me, I should like to know? Do you call that pluck? I never shall put you on guard again!" exclaimed Spicy.

Ann slowly arose from her knees.

"So you are not much of a soldier, after all? Tell me what you saw." I addressed her from the door of the blue-room.

"I know it was onkind to desert Miss Spicy, but I daren't do no other way, cause my old mistress, who's dead this many a year, was right there afore me, and shure it was me she was affhur."

"How did she look?"

"Very quare in the eye, marm. Discontented like, as if she was a mite lonesome, and wanted her owld faithful Ann to fix her broth, and make her tay for her."

Spicy giggled, and then, trying to control herself with a sort of nervous desperation, burst into tears.

"What are you crying for?" I asked, smiling.

"Because my grandmother is dead;" and then she giggled again, until I thought she was going to strangle.

The north hall-door opened and shut just then, and while I strained my ears in breathless anxiety for what was to

follow, Nursy Brown ran up the stairs. She was panting and more excited than usual for her, but when Spicy questioned eagerly as to what was the matter, and where she had been, she only answered:

"Nothing is the matter, dear; and I've been under the barberry-bush, to try to settle the point in my mind whether any one climbed up or down the grape-arbor near the closet window."

"And did you see any one?"

"No, dear."

"You know the ghost has paid me a visit? Ann and I both saw her!"

"I presumed so, and that was why I slipped out as soon as I heard the stir in the blue-room. But I am back no wiser than I went."

"We may as well lock up the room and go to bed," I said, beginning to feel the effect of my unseasonable exertions.

"And you want no more of me, do you?" asked Ann, in a hollow voice.

"Yes; we want you to pray till morning, to keep us clear of purgatory," said Spicy, with a sober face. "If you are afraid to go down to your room alone I will go with you, and count sled-stakes as I go."

"Hush!" I said, grasping her arm.

I was afraid Ann might take exceptions to being ridiculed, but she did not seem to mind it. She looked as if she thought Spicy was going to carry out her proposition, and I think she would have very much liked to have had her done so.

I shook my head, and she departed. Nursy Brown put out the candle and the gas, and locked the blue-room door, and Spicy staid in my room to give me my medicine at four o'clock.

I don't know how many times she looked at that picture of Fred Gildersleeve before she got quiet! Once she kissed it. She put it under her pillow, took it out again and laid it in a chair, removed it over to the table, carried it to the bureau, brought it back to the bed, and changed it no less than a dozen times from the pillow to the chair and back again. I did not esteem it worth while to talk any more, for the night was far spent, and we both slept at last.

I had a carpenter come the next day and put a lock on the closet-door. Nursy Brown advised me to keep the blue-room under lock and key also. It was not pleasant to feel that a portion of one's house was uninhabitable, but I resolved upon that course until such time as we should be able to decide what sort of a being was entailed upon our hospitality.

Leonardus arrived, shoulder-straps and all, on the first day of July. He had got leave of absence for a month, and brought gladness to our hearts. We had so much to tell him, and we talked so fast and so constantly, that I began to fear that he never would remember the half we were saying, and had already proposed a little music by way of giving him a rest, when Spicy began about her ghost, and told the story in such a diverting style that he laughed heartily.

"Four of you all saw the same thing, did you? Well, that sounds like evidence. No getting over that."

But the robbery did not strike him in so pleasant a vein. His brow clouded, and he asked a great many questions. I saw Spicy's lip quivering, and the sparkle in her eyes getting dimmed from an ap-

proaching shower, and hastily turned the subject. There was such an excellent opportunity to do so just then, too, for Nursy Brown was coming up the walk with Bright, and his father had not seen him yet.

How my heart beat as he caught him up, and tossed him in the air, and held him at arms' length, and looked at him! Bright was afraid. He was not used to gentlemen. A soldier in full uniform he had never seen except on the street. He did not appreciate the familiar hugs and kisses of the great bronzed fellow who shook him round. He made up a lip more remarkable for every thing else than beauty, and stretched his chubby arms toward Nursy Brown, who stood waiting in the entry, and then he screamed with a volume of sound that caused Leonardus to pass him over with the remark:

"You will make a good general, my boy."

We heard him cry for some time after he reached the nursery. Leonardus sitting on the piano-stool, with his hands in his pockets, was looking at the carpet.

"I was trying to think, Meddie, where I had seen those eyes before," he said, at length, with a perplexed air.

"What eyes, or whose eyes? excuse my grammar."

"Bright's nurse's, or whatever you call the person who took him from me."

"I don't know, I am sure."

"Neither do I. I will tell you who she reminds me of. You have heard me speak of Lewis Vance, my old chum at Harvard, who is now Brigadier-General Vance of the army of the Potomac? Well, it is his wife. I was at their house

in Boston, after my return from California. He married Judge Shubill's niece of Detroit, one of the most beautiful girls on this continent."

"In what respect does Nursy Brown look like her?"

"I really cannot say. It is her eyes, I reckon. There is something very peculiar about them. Don't you think so?"

"Indeed I do," chimed in Spicy.

"And, by the way, there is a sad bit of history connected with that unfortunate pair. I met poor Vance when I went to Washington with those dispatches, and, one night, by the flickering light of his camp-fire, he unburdened his heart to me. He married his wife abroad, and I never knew the circumstances before. She was travelling with her brother, her only near relative, and in Florence they fell in company with Lewis Vance. He and young Everett had known each other in Buffalo, where the latter was doing a thriving mercantile business."

"What was the sister's name?" asked Spicy and I, both in the same breath.

"Ida—Ida Everett. Why do you stare so?"

"Never mind, go on," I said, as calmly as possible, although my heart was getting up a great tattoo at the prospect of learning something of Ida Everett's fortunes.

"Well, as I was saying, the gentlemen knew each other, and Vance fell in love with the lady. He offered himself in his abrupt and impetuous manner, and was very kindly and firmly refused. Still he hovered about, determined to win her, and saw her daily. His love increased until it became an infatuation. The

brother fell sick, and his life was in great danger, so that it became necessary to remove him to a small German town where the air was dry and pure. Vance accompanied them, and devoted himself with loving assiduity to the task of nursing his friend, and keeping up the spirits of the anxious sister. Everett lingered for many weeks, and then died with only the two watchers to follow him to the tomb. In the earliest part of his sickness Ida had written to her uncle, but the letter, like many another that followed it, never went farther than Lewis Vance's pocket. Now, while she was counting the days which must elapse before her good guardian could reach her, the villain knew that he had her in his power and bided his time.

"Full of sorrow for her loved and lost brother, and despairing lest she should be left in a foreign land, not only devoid of funds wherewith to accomplish her homeward trip, but dependent upon her own very limited travelling experience, she listened with more lenity to the protestations of her lover, and when he vowed that he would not leave her, whether she married him or not, and on his bended knees begged her to save him from self-destruction by becoming his wife, she at last consented, reluctantly, he well knew, for she was frank enough to tell him, on more than one occasion, that she loved another, and where it was not returned.

"The wedding must have been a sad one. Vance, whose habits were none of the best, and who had been so long under self-imposed restraint in order to obtain his wife, fell headlong into dissipation. In Paris he launched out into the

most unbounded extravagance. Arrived in Boston, he bought a Beacon-Street mansion, filled it with costly trappings, supplied his wife with silks and satins and jewelry, which she would never wear, and abused and adored her according to his moods. He was a man of most ungovernable passions, and, with the tears of contrition streaming down his weather-beaten face, he told me how he had often struck her in his fits of madness, for no other reason than because she looked so sweet and suffering. He wanted to teach her to have spunk enough to strike back. But he never did. He had the misfortune to have a fortune left him and was on the straight road through it, although it happened to be so large that he had time to cause a great deal of misery before he got to the end of the route.

"One strange freak which he carried through with a high hand was, not to allow his wife to visit her uncle, and, when that dear old gentleman came to Boston, he managed to make his stay so uncomfortable, that neither Ida nor the judge cared to have it prolonged. About two years after they were married she announced her intention of going to Detroit for an absence of two weeks. He raved. But she was decided for once. Seeing himself powerless to prevent her from going, he swore she should leave her baby at home, a little fellow not quite as old as our Bright, and carried his point with threats.

"Her uncle returned with her at the time appointed, but did not go to her house. He had business in Providence and New Haven, and went on immediately. Vance met her, half-drunk as

usual, and told her she should pay for her ridiculous wilfulness in going to Detroit against his wishes. She greeted him pleasantly, and ran up-stairs to her baby. The nursery was vacant. She hurried from room to room, and lastly to the kitchen, to inquire for the little one. The cook told her that the nurse had taken him out for a walk. So she took off her things and watched from the window tearfully and impatiently for his return. Vance saw her distress, and acted upon it. He says an army of devils must have taken possession of him. He went to the door, and when the girl brought the child up the steps he took it from her and dismissed her. Knowing his peculiarities, she was too much frightened to say any thing and went round to the kitchen. He took the child to its mother, and, just as she was about to receive it from his arms with an expression of supreme delight on her face, he lifted it high in the air, and let it fall from the dizzy distance to the floor. The little creature never breathed afterward.

"He was sobered before the funeral, but his wife refused to see him. He wondered why there had been no more fuss and excitement! He had expected both. He did not exactly care to be arrested for murder, but he meant to show that little saint of a woman who was master in his house. Didn't care much if the brat was gone, if folks would take it peaceably. Ida had always loved it a d——n sight better than she had him. But he don't think he meant to kill it. Was so far gone the night afterward that he did not know he had.

"He sat by the side of his wife while the minister read the burial-service over

the little casket which contained their all. He rode by her side in the carriage to Mt. Auburn cemetery. He stood by her side while a little mound was raised. He did all that was respectable and proper. But he never once got a glimpse of her face from behind the wall of crape which enshrouded her, nor did they exchange a word during the whole time. He was extremely depressed, from the want of his accustomed stimulant, and left the carriage before arriving at his own door, to step into a saloon. He went home about midnight, and found on his table a little note of farewell. His wife had left him forever. It ran thus:

"LEWIS: You have no accuser. Fear not. I sent for our physician and told him I had dropped my baby. He could not bring the darling back to life. Its death is supposed to be the result of a mother's carelessness.

"Seek me not, for you will never find me. I do not go to my uncle, nor to any one who ever knew me. Nor shall I ever present any claims for one penny of your property, nor for what was once mine, but is now in your hands. IDA."

"If you could have seen that stout man weep in his bitterness of spirit when he showed me that worn note, your heart would have bled for him, richly as he deserved his punishment. He swears that from that hour until the present time he has not tasted a glass of liquor. That until the breaking out of the Rebellion he has never ceased his unavailing search for his loved and lost. He has travelled through the country on foot to ferret out, if possible, her refuge in some by-place, has walked up and down the streets of large cities, gazing

into every face that he passed; has journeyed from point to point, from horizon to horizon—the one great purpose of his life to find and humble himself before her whom he had so terribly and so cruelly wronged, and crave forgiveness for the past, even if the future must be a stinging blank."

CHAPTER VIII.

REMORSE AND RETRIBUTION.

"How it does soften one toward a wicked man to have him repentant!" said Spicy, with a little gulp. "I would never want to see him, though, if I were she."

"She must have understood him well to provide against such a possible contingency," continued Leonardus. "He has never so much as obtained the slightest trace of her. And she cut herself equally adrift from all her friends. Not one of them can tell whether she be living or dead. Judge Shubill has gone down in sorrow to his grave. He was a bachelor, some web of romance woven into his history, I believe. I have some idea that I have been told that it was Ida's mother whom he loved in his youth, but I am not sure. At any rate he adopted the little orphan, and educated her, and very nearly idolized her. Now he has left the whole bulk of his property, real and personal, in trust for her, should she ever come forward to receive it. He gave her \$50,000 as a bridal present, and that, I suppose, was what she referred to in her note. Vance says he has deposited it, subject to her order, and so settled his own affairs that heirs-

at-law cannot put in their hearing unless his wife's decease is properly authenticated. He hopes to fall in battle, and courts the positions of greatest danger. His reputation for daring and intrepidity is unequalled in that division of the army. Life is an intolerable burden to him, and remorse is sapping the very foundations of his existence.

"I took out that little picture of Bright which you sent me, Meddie, as I have had a fashion of doing at any time, and under any circumstances, and was intently regarding it, when all at once he leaned forward and looked over my shoulder:

"Good God! Belmore, how did you come by that?"

"His face looked like a dying man's. I explained, and after a few minutes he gasped:

"Pardon me; it is so like my boy that I thought you were displaying it to taunt me! O Belmore, my punishment is greater than I can bear."

We were interrupted by a summons to dinner, and conversation turned upon the thousand and one topics so interesting to the heads of families, and so uninteresting to the world in general. Spicy tried to tell Leonardus about the old letters, and their connection with Ida Everett, but I had Bright in my arms, and was trying to teach him to say Papa, and he would persist in getting it "Pay, pay," and the brigadier couldn't listen to any thing else just then. Afterward one of his favorite rice-puddings came on the table, and he took the youngster himself to try to make him say Plum; but, with the obstinacy natural to children, the little mischief

screwed up his face and kept saying "Berwy, berwy," leaving his mouth wide open to have one put in occasionally.

In the evening we went out to walk, and the next day Leonardus had business with the commandant of the post at Camp Douglas, and did not get home until four o'clock P. M.

"Now, Spicy, what about those love-epistles?" he asked, as he stretched himself upon the lounge in the library:

She ran and got them, told him some, and read other portions to him. He was greatly interested.

"How happened it, Meddie, that you never took the trouble to find out who lived in this house before you?" he asked.

"I did. It is the old Dwight Mansion, you know. They, or some of the members of the Dwight family, have occupied it from the time it was built until about a year ago. Then it was rented to a family by the name of Thomas. No one seems to know much about them, except that they paid their rent and let the place go to the dogs. If window-shutters flopped, they let them flop; if water-pipes burst, they let them burst; if rats chose to play on the front-stairs, they let them play there; in short, as children used to say when I was among their happy number:

'They did as they do in Spain:
When it rained, they let it rain.'

Where they went, when they left here, no one seems to know, any more than where they came from. They had boarders, as near as we can ascertain. But there is not much prospect of learning more."

"I see. And any discoveries in re-

gard to the Gildersleeves wouldn't help us, or Ida Everett either."

"Poor thing! How she must have suffered!" said Spicy. "Now, wouldn't it be the strangest thing of all," and she lowered her voice to a half-whisper, "if our Nursy Brown were that very individual!"

"I don't think so," Leonardus replied, promptly and decidedly. "I must say I did have a suspicion of the kind the first day I arrived. The deep, rich blue of her eye, with such a depth of soul in back of it, brought Mrs. Vance vividly to my mind. But I have observed this person more closely since, and I am certain that one so highly bred and nurtured and cultivated, and who at the last was drowned in such an ocean of trouble as Ida Everett, could never have fitted herself to the position which Nursy Brown holds, and with such a measure of serene content. Ida Everett, with all her other gifts and graces, was a brilliant writer, and won distinction under a *nom de plume*, even before her marriage. She would have been much more likely to have resorted to literature for a livelihood, if she took no money with her, as Vance fully supposes."

So it seemed to me. How the stronger always influence the weaker! Ten minutes before, I was morally confident that Nursy Brown was the heroine of my tale. I had sketched it on my brain, accounted for her passionate devotion to my baby by its resemblance to her own, divined the greatness of her character by the marvellous aptitude with which she engrossed herself in little things, and was trying to shape my figures of speech when I should, some day, approach her on the delicate and distressing subject.

One argument from Leonardus, and I was all afloat again.

"I have to go to Buffalo on the 5th. Now, wifey, if you will tie up a few things in a pillow-case and keep me company, we will stop a day or two in Cleveland, and visit the Burgoynes."

"I shall be delighted to do so, I know of nothing to prevent," was my quick response.

Although I did not say so, I had a few preparations to make for my journey. The buttons were not on my new travelling-dress nor the sleeves sewed in. My brown silk was too long. I had had in contemplation the taking off the skirt from the waist and the shortening of it, and I must do that, surely, for it was my only dress-dress. My hat must be newly trimmed too, and I must go down-town for gloves and sundry other articles. So that, with my plotting and planning, I buried Ida Everett and all her possible connections.

Leonardus, like many another man whom I have known, never was willing his wife should do any thing when he was present. Her whole attention must be devoted to him. I was glad enough to humor him in it generally, but when one is going somewhere and chooses to look her feminine best, why, it is inconvenient, to say the least. However, he had some running about the city to do himself, looking after soldiers' families, he said, and with Nursy Brown and Spicy both to assist me, I was nearly ready, when Ann came lumbering up to my room where I was sorting out my collars and cuffs and neck-ribbons.

"I should like to be gettin' my money if you please, ma'am."

"Yes, Ann, I will give it to you this evening. Do you want it all?"

"I does. I am going to take a little picnic to-morrow."

"Oh, I cannot spare you. I have invited some friends to dine."

"I gets no dinner for nobody on the Fourth of July. I always has that to myself. We folks that steam over the hot stoves must get a little change sometimes."

"But you know my husband, whom I have not seen for more than a year, is here, and I want to make every thing as pleasant for him as possible. I will give you a day next week. Won't that answer just as well?"

"No, ma'am." Most emphatically spoken. "I hasn't seen my man for twice that time, but I has got to have a little pleasure myself for all that. I sha'n't do no work in this house to-morrow."

"What! not get my breakfast in the morning?"

"Sure and I sha'n't! The picnic goes at six o'clock."

At any other time I should have said, "Very well, you need not trouble yourself to come back;" but I thought of my trip with Leonardus on the day following the Fourth, and swallowed my annoyance. She was off according to her programme, before we had got two-thirds of the way to finally in our dreams. We worried through the day as best we could. Nursy Brown cooked, and I was baby-tender; Maggie washed dishes, and Spicy swept carpets; and Leonardus divided his time between entertaining our guests, and throwing open the doors and letting the flies in as fast as I could get them

out, and firing-off crackers and torpedoes for Bright's edification. In the evening we had a private display of pin-wheels and Roman candles, and thus ended the most doleful day of the season. Bright was cross and wouldn't go to sleep, nor would he allow the rest of us any indulgence of the kind. At a quarter-past twelve Ann had not arrived.

Our train left the Southern Michigan depot at six in the morning. What was to be done? I could not leave such a burden on the shoulders of Nursy Brown—it was enough for her to take care of Bright. Ann might not return at all; Maggie was not strong, the weather was oppressively hot, and she knew nothing about cooking in any event. It was inevitable, I must stay at home. Leonardus and I were both disappointed.

"Then I think I will not stop in Cleveland—I will go the other route through Detroit," he said.

"Why not stop over one night with Cousin Phil?"

"I believe I will. I would like to know how the boy is getting on."

"Be careful! Don't call him a boy. He would think you meant to insult him."

Leonardus laughed. "Have you the number of his boarding-house?"

"He boards with his sister, Mrs. Lawrence. I have her address on a card. Here it is," and I put the little guide-board in his vest-pocket.

"I will get my breakfast at the Briggs House; don't try to wake when I go," and my good-night was my good-by for many days.

We had no Ann the next day, and,

although I had never had a better cook, I felt that her course was run in my establishment. I made another tour through the intelligence-offices, which resulted in the employment of a pretty, cross-eyed little German girl, and I introduced her with all necessary pomp and circumstance into the clean, well-kept kitchen of the recreant Ann. She proved to be a jewel in her way. Had been assistant-cook in a hotel, was amiable as well as efficient, and quite consoled me for the loss I had sustained. Her Annship did not make her appearance for thirteen days, when she walked in one morning fresh and blooming, her muslin dress as pink and starchy as ever, and, with the blandest of smiles, asked me if I was pretty well.

Yes, I was, and I hoped she was in the enjoyment of the same blessing. It was on a Monday, and I was in the laundry, telling Louisa how to wash some point-lace. She beckoned me aside (Ann, not Louisa), and asked me who that little *snip* was, who was switching round at such a rate.

"It is my new cook, Louisa."

"But she can't do your work!"

"She pleases me very well, so far."

"Oh, she never'll suit you in the world. Nobody but I can do that. I understand all your ways and tastes, and I makes every thing illigant, and I washes like new. Send her agoin'. I am come back, you see."

"How came you to leave me as you did, Ann?"

"Well, I'll just tell you all about it. That picnic went, you know, down to Cottage Grove, and it got through along in the afternoon, and I started for home.

I hadn't had any thing to eat but some cake I carried with me, and nothing to drink but jest one leetle glass of beer, which I took with a friend, because I never drink or any thing of that kind, I am too principled, and as I was a-sayin', I was a-comin' home in the State-Street cars, and I saw another car agoin' down toward the grove again, and I jest happened to think I had disremembered my parasol, and so I got out of one car and got into the other car; and then I was kinder sociable like with some of the gentlemen and ladies who seemed to think I didn't understand my business; and the conductor sassed me, and all I did was to slap him in the face, and the great, mean Irish pumpkin went and stopped the car and called the perlise, and had me jest dragged to the station-house. Then they locked me up and fined me six dollars! I hadn't got nothing to pay it, cause my pus had been stolen at the picnic, but I told them that, if Mrs. General Belmore only knew about it, she would send me the six dollars mighty quick—"

I interrupted her: "Oh! I hope you did not tell them you were my servant! How disgraceful!"

"Why, bless your dear heart, I had not done any thing. They had only got it all up agin me. They wouldn't come up and tell you and get the money, so I had to go to the Bridewell and work it out. But I didn't associate among the low folks at all! Oh, no! There was jest a few of us, aristocratic ones, who knit and sewed, and made the rest of them wait on us, and had a pretty good time together."

"I can't take you back, Ann. You

must provide yourself with another place."

"Why not? I am an illigant cook, as you know yourself, and I niver drinks nor does any thing wrong!"

There was something extremely ludicrous in the effrontery with which she looked full into my face and made that assertion. I smiled in spite of myself.

"But you have been in Bridewell. I would not like to have a jail-bird in my kitchen!"

"That's jest nothin' at all, only the way folks looks at it. I's been there lots of times, and cooked jest as good whin I came out. I had been there more'n five weeks when I engaged with you first, and this is no wosser than that."

I almost shuddered! How little we know sometimes what sort of people we harbor! It is needless to add that I declined the overtures of my ex-cook, and thanked my stars that I had found her out with no more serious consequences. I also had occasion to rejoice over the thwarting of my travelling projects, as you will learn presently. Leonardus stopped in Detroit and hunted up Phil; that is, he found Phil's sister and spent the night. Phil was at a concert and did not return until very late, and Leonardus finally decided to stay over till evening and take the night train for Buffalo. The two rambled about the city that day; and, finally, Phil persuaded Leonardus to step into a gallery and have his picture taken. While waiting for the operator, they examined the specimens of his art which were lying on the counters and hanging on the walls. Leonardus picked up the card photograph

of a negro, and was laughing at his display of finery—a ruffled shirt-front, fringed neck-tie, watch-chain, and finger-rings. Presently his countenance changed, and he stepped along to a stronger light.

"Look here, Phil! What do you make of this?"

Their eyes were both riveted upon a peculiar charm suspended to the chain.

"It is a greyhound," said Phil.

"So I say. And the fac-simile of the one, if not the very same charm, which I gave to Meddie on our wedding-day. Perhaps we've got hold of the thread, which, by winding up carefully, will lead to the detection of the robbers."

They instituted inquiries. The artist knew something of the whereabouts of his African highness—the detectives found out the rest; and when Leonardus stopped again in Detroit, on his return from Buffalo, he had the satisfaction of identifying my stolen property.

As was subsequently shown, the old Irishman who moved us, and who spotted the goods, entered into a partnership with the negro to accomplish the business. The negro was an expert and did the work, and they divided the proceeds. They had considerable difference of opinion about who should come in for the watch and its accompaniments, for the man of color said:

"You can't neber sell no such thing widout the detectables bein' after you and disconveniencin' you."

But it was finally settled as above. They had disposed of the buttons and the garnet set, but they had given them much trouble and been an unprofitable

investment. My solitaire diamond, Cuffy said he would put away for his Nancy, as it was of no account much. The pearls had fallen to Patrick's share, and he had given them to his old woman. He didn't know where she was, but his memory was stirred up, and, after tedious researches, Leonardus confronted my remarkable Ann in a neighbor's kitchen.

"And is Patrick O'Daly your husband?"

"Well, he married me onst, but he niver's took no care of me nor nothin' like that."

"Do you know where he is now?"

"No. Nor it don't make any matter."

"He has sent me to you to get a pin and a pair of ear-rings, which he says he gave you for a present some time in June, while you were living with Mrs. Belmore."

"Humph! Presint, was it? He tould me to tuck 'em away in my trunk o' things, which stands in your wood-shed! That's all I know about it."

"Step round with me, if you please, and get them. They belong to my wife."

She looked rather defiant, but an individual with a star on his breast was more potent in his persuasions than Leonardus knew how to be, and the pearls came forth as good as new. And a set of my best towels, and six pairs of linen pillow-cases, and Bright's silver mug, and five forks also, by order of the subscriber!

I could hardly believe my own eyes! And that they should have been under my own roof all the time, even if it was the wood-shed roof. Louisa had once or twice asked me why Ann did not take

that old trunk of hers away. I supposed she had no place to take it to, and I supposed correctly. But I little dreamed what it contained.

Ann walked in as self-possessed as if nothing had happened:

"I are jest agoin' to lave the place I've got. They don't have no order there, nor no system, nor nothin'. They keeps the tay and the shuger locked up, and dales out things to me, and meddles with my closets. You know I can cook illigant. I jest suit you. I am ready to come now. You is a lady and keeps good society, and never fusses with your help."

She threw a smirk into my face, which did not take effect. I had the hardness of heart to refuse to take her into my service, and, what was more, I stood coolly by and saw her led away toward the place prepared for all Chicagoans who do not walk in the paths of honesty, though where but few enter.

She was acquitted when the trial came off, owing to the absence of proof in regard to her complicity in the robbery. But Patrick and Cuffy were doomed to steady labor for the period of five years.

Long before Leonardus turned his face warward, our house became the busy field for dress-makers' operations. Spicy was going to New York in September, to finish her education at Miss Gilbert's school on Fifth Avenue. I was to be her escort to the great city, and there was work to be done for me also.

To keep the coast clear within criticising distance of our army officer, I threw open the blue-room and all the cutting and fitting were done there. Then,

as we were crowded for room to spread new goods without rumpling, I opened the ghost-closet, laid sheets on the floor, and made it a regular store-room.

"I expect we shall tempt the inhabitants of this realm until we get up another scene in the drama," said Spicy, as on her knees she straightened out the folds of a new dress, and left it lying at full length near the window.

How often a word spoken in jest proves, alas, too true!

CHAPTER IX.

MISS TERRAPIN.

LEONARDUS had been gone three weeks. We were so crowded with work that I had no time to mope and be lonely. I was bending all my energies to get ready to leave for the East by the 10th of September, in order to make a brief visit in Albany before dropping Spicy at her school. The time was so close at hand that we needed more assistance, and Spicy took it upon herself to find another dress-maker. In a third-floor on Lake Street she was rewarded by success. She found Miss Terrapin.

I had heard of the lady before, for, whatever her business, she was undoubtedly a lady. My Aunt Hatty, Cousin Phil's mother, knew her when a child in the little town of Gothland, near Northampton, in Massachusetts. They were brought up together, that is, they both attended Sunday services in the Congregational meeting-house in the centre, and while Aunt Hatty sat in the square pew at the right of the pulpit, between her father and mother, and dared not so much as raise her hand to

brush a fly from her face for fear of the *tithing-man*, Clara Terrapin sang in the choir. She was the daughter of the squire, and the house they lived in had two chimneys, and her brothers wore gloves to church.

A dozen years later, when progress had left its mark even in that isolated locality in the shape of a new church and a town-hall, and Aunt Hatty had gone back there on a visit with her father (they lived in Hartford then), she learned, among other interesting items, that Clara Terrapin was at the South, teaching. The townspeople esteemed it a distinguished honor to be able to report so favorably of one of their number, and the young and ambitious were studying how they might emulate her example.

She must have conceived the unpopular notion that God never put her into this world simply to take music-lessons, flirt, and get married, for she had gone on through life cultivating her talents, inventing ways of usefulness, crowding efforts into untried spots, failing, trying again, learning, unlearning, and relearning, until she had reached her present standard in the high building where Spicy found her.

At one time she had a snug little property, which had been bequeathed her by a deceased relative. It was a source of perpetual peace of mind. Money is so very convenient! And then it is not always esteemed eminently respectable to be destitute. She had heard it said:

"Want sense, the world will o'erlook it;
Want feeling, it will find some excuse;
But, if the world knows you want money,
You are certain to get its abuse."

And she was beginning to practice on the principle—

"The wisest advice in creation
Is, ne'er on its kindness to call;
If ever you want its assistance,
Just show you don't need it at all."

People went so far at that time as to comment upon the singularity of her tastes in remaining Miss Terrapin! One widower and three old bachelors declared that women were created to be taken care of by men, without regard to circumstances! They were never known to advocate such heresy after one bright morning, when, through the failure of a certain bank, the maiden's dependence passed away like a shadow!

She took the measure of herself at once, and demonstrated to the world that misfortunes could be healthfully borne. Yes, she would battle for her living, while hands and heart were left. She could not open a school with advantage, for she was behind the times in youthful lore. Literature was not in her line. So she rented a doctor and his wife with the house they lived in, and commenced the business of feeding and sleeping people at so much per head.

For a time all went well. Her principal boarder was an eye-and-ear doctor, and forty. He had a broad, expansive forehead, a soft blue eye, a large, domineering nose, an uncertain mouth, long, curly, brown hair, and heavy mustache and whiskers. He was neither too tall nor too short, but of medium stature, and thick-set. He was vastly agreeable, vastly restless, and everywhere present. By virtue of having been rented with the house, he felt called upon to look after its interests in a supervisory manner. He made semi-hourly excursions to the

closets, pantries, drawers, and other private places, to say nothing of all the way-stations between the garret and the cellar. He stopped up rat-holes, tended the furnace, lectured the servants, and made himself useful generally. Indeed, he was just one of those sort of men who might have danced a German upon the point of a cambric-needle, and had room enough left for an audience.

It was such a comfort to have him round, so thought Miss Terrapin in her blissful inexperience. It was the servants who made wry faces when his orders multiplied, and obedience became impracticable. Then he bought them up with little presents of wax-flowers, which did not cost him any thing, and his wife donated a few high-colored ribbons from her upper bureau-drawer.

He was the family carver by his own appointment. It was so very kind of him! His dexterity in securing the tenderloin of the steak to himself was admirable to behold! It inclined Miss Terrapin's argus-eyed boarders to sue for a life-lease of their apartments. He always got hungry in the middle of the day. It was so pleasant for Miss Terrapin to have a man's head at the helm. He could instruct her how to provide for the lunches, else she might have fallen into the popular delusion of putting such dishes on her table as she could afford. The bill of fare, according to Dr. Meddlesome, was cold meat, hot meat-stews, hash, oysters, potatoes, hominy, boiled rice, bread-and-butter, gingerbread, pie, horseradish, mustard, molasses, and something sour—either pickles or cold cabbage; did not object to a lemon. After that he could manage to exist until

dinner-time, if it was on the table promptly at six o'clock. If, by any chance, there was a delay of five minutes, as there would be when he called the cook away from taking up the vegetables to hold a candle for him to fix the cellar-door knob, or the waitress from setting the table to sweep off the front steps, he was at the head of the stairs calling down to say he was in a hurry.

Miss Terrapin had a very uncomfortable way of serving her dinner in courses. She was unkind enough to omit the salad until after the soup. Dr. Meddlesome expostulated with her, and was confounded when she asserted her own supremacy, and declined to make any changes in that particular. It was clearly a declaration of war. He was not fond of strong-minded women, and he took immediate steps to hint on the sly his dissatisfaction to the rest of the boarders. Nothing was right any more. The coffee and plates were both cold in the morning. It might have been because he read Miss Terrapin's paper for ten minutes or so after sitting down to the table. It saved his taking one himself. She ventured to hint the same to him, and he took mortal offence, but never a newspaper. Boarders left, without giving notice or reasons. She filled their places as soon as possible, but not always without pecuniary loss and subsequent embarrassment. She felt as if she were riding round all the sharp corners of life in a hearse. Finally, her servants began to leave her in the most extraordinary manner! She suspected the cause when she saw Dr. Meddlesome dodging about in the lower regions, but she could not

fight him without understanding his secret machinery. A mysterious silence hung about her kitchen. She hired new servants, but as soon as she turned her back they departed. The breakfasts and the dinners and the lunches were no longer properly cooked, for the lady of the house could not stand over the range herself, and be wandering up and down the highways and the by-ways at the same time looking for servants.

Dr. Meddlesome became melancholy. He told his friends that he had got some one to keep his house who was not capable. Mrs. Meddlesome thought it unwise for a single woman to undertake such a burden as a boarding-house. Miss Terrapin bought a lot at Rose Hill, and contemplated her future home there with pleasure. She concluded she must have mistaken her calling in life. She struck a balance, finally, and, finding that she was on the wrong side of her accounts altogether, took the straight and narrow road to another field of labor.

Music had been her forte in her youth. Music-teachers lived, moved, and had their being, and why not she? She took a hall bedroom in the fourth story of a friend's house till she could get a class formed. Then she started on her weary pilgrimage. Wherever a child was rolling hoop she turned her footsteps. At door after door she inquired if there were any children who would take music-lessons! She distributed printed cards among all her friends, and those who ought to be friendly. She threw her whole soul into the enterprise. At the end of two months she had obtained two pupils! I hardly know how to account for her want of success!

Most families, I dare say, had teachers already provided for their young people. Others thought she was too old! She called herself forty-five! I don't know whose business it was if she had been forty-five for seven or eight years. Perhaps she had conscientious scruples about getting any older. Forty-five is in my estimation quite old enough for an old maid.

She struggled on for two or three years in a sort of transition state between existence and starvation. At one time she had five scholars, but, to get them, she had to take them under the established price, and, in one instance, failed to collect that. She must dress well; not only her natural tastes but her possible ultimate success, demanded it, and, being uncommonly tall, it was a serious drain upon her poverty-stricken pocket. Her friends tired, at last, of giving her a gratuitous home, and told her so. She looked for board, but single maiden ladies are not usually at a premium in that market. Gentlemen always take the preference. Miss Terrapin wondered at it, and no wonder she did! At one place she ventured to ask the reason. The lady seemed surprised that she should not understand!

"Because gentlemen are away all day, never come to lunch, don't keep servants always running to attend to their calls and their fires, have good appetites, and mind their own business."

"Some gentlemen!" was Miss Terrapin's laconic reply.

She found a place in the end, where, by sleeping on a sofa in the parlor, and helping the lady with her plain sewing, she could make a temporary lodgment.

She advertised for copying and earned a little that way. My aunt Hatty employed her at one time to take charge of her house for a few months, while she was in Washington. She had a gift at needle-work. For years, she had made her own dresses. I don't know what was the flaw in her understanding, that she should have been so long finding her proper level. But, at last, she rented rooms and opened a dress-making establishment. She succeeded, for she had a natural talent lying in that direction, and while the world and Chicago stand people must dress. Her shop hung with the latest New York and Paris patterns, and the back-room revealed a dozen or more girls hard at work for their daily bread.

Spicy asked her to step round and see me, as we had several garments we wished made out of the house, and very little time to attend to it ourselves. She came in the evening and talked fast and said a great deal. I took note of it, because some people who talk fast never say anything. She was thoroughly master of the situation. She could tell me just what was suitable to wear in any emergency. She knew exactly how many pieces of wearing-apparel the young lady needed for her school-year. She secretly informed us what the prevailing styles would be in the winter and spring, and how much cheaper goods could be bought in Chicago than New York. She offered to attend to all my shopping for a trifling commission.

A valuable acquisition to my circle of acquaintance, surely! Her name suddenly became a household word. It was: Ask Miss Terrapin about that; Miss Terrapin told me this. It will nev-

er do, Miss Terrapin says they are not worn. How many pocket-handkerchiefs did Miss Terrapin say I must have? Where is the sample Miss Terrapin sent me? This waist pinches, but Miss Terrapin says it is none too tight. Miss Terrapin says I do not walk good in high-heeled boots. Ask Miss Terrapin whether it shall be trimmed with fringe or lace; and similar expressions constituted the small-talk of the family. I did not see how I had ever done without Miss Terrapin!

She was always laughing about my low ceilings. She could not stand erect, only on the high side of the blue-room. She said she should not like to be the one to go into that dungeon of a closet. She should expect such a place to be haunted. She did not believe in ghosts, but should never doubt any one's veracity who said she had seen one in there.

"Speaking of ghosts," she went on, "they have one good trait, they never do anybody any harm, and it always vexes me to see folks so stupidly afraid of them."

"That is even so," replied Spicy; "don't you think some one ought to befriend the poor creatures? Here my ghost has been locked out of civilized society all summer, and now I suppose she would not come back even if we invited her. We ought to have treated her better, more as became her station among the spirits; it would have been so much more respectable, I mean for the ghost."

"This ribbon is too narrow, Mrs. Belmore. I will stop at Palmer's and get you one the right width. You will find the lace cheaper at Shay's, and you will want a half-yard more to finish the un-

der-sleeves. Shall I give Mrs. Hopson your order for the hat?"

Miss Terrapin was standing with her bonnet and gloves on, leaning over Spicy's shoulder, who was persisting in great efforts to accomplish the joining of two rough pieces of wash-blond.

We were in the blue-room, seamstresses and all, and there was not much unoccupied space. I should hardly have known the hour if the lunch-bell had not rung about that time, although it was plain that the sun had passed the meridian, from the way in which it was blistering the outside of the green window-shutters. The closet-door had not been shut since it was first unlocked, and we had all taken a turn in trying to admit air through the window, and make the place less like an oven than it really was, but without success. It was almost filled with finished garments, tossed loosely upon each other, and the window could no longer be reached without creeping along where the sharp roof met the floor. It was decidedly darkish in there as well as hot, and four or five freshly-ironed white skirts hitched on some hooks just by the door-way, rendered it darker and hotter still.

All at once there came a silence that was in itself acutely painful! It was as if a pall had suddenly been dropped over every person present! No one breathed, much less spoke! All our eyes rested upon the figure of a woman looking at us from the closet!

She had the appearance of standing on the second step down, and held in her hand a scroll of paper. And such a hand! So bony and attenuated! She was clad in white raiment. No shroud,

but a wrapper of cross-barred muslin, with pearl buttons! Her face was haggard and wan, her neck long and small, the veins and cords standing out prominently visible; her hair, drawn back plain from her high, sharp forehead, was caught up in a net; and her eyes, blacker than night, and fearfully glassy, wandered from one to another of our white, scared faces, with a terrified expression.

It was not long, could not have been more than three seconds, that we thus regarded each other, the six and the one. Then the one was gone, and not one of the six had the power to follow her!

Some minutes elapsed, when Miss Terrapin rallied her forces, and proposed to one of the sewing-girls to see where that woman had gone.

"I should rather you would undertake the job," was the reply.

"I am willing enough, but I am so long all in one direction, that I am afraid it would not be practicable."

I was as one petrified!—not so much with absolute fear, although there is no use in denying the sensation, as in my utter inability to account for the phenomenon. Spicy must have been similarly affected, for, letting her work slide under her feet, she started up, threw herself into my arms, and burst into a fit of weeping almost hysterical. Miss Terrapin tried to console her.

"It is nothing but some crazy person. Don't mind it. She wouldn't touch a hair of your head. And she has gone, too—is half a mile away by this time probably."

"Half a mile away! Miss Terrapin, if you will show me how she got away, if she has really gone, you will do me

the greatest kindness," exclaimed Spicy. "It is all very well to theorize over who or what she is or may be, but solve the problem of how she comes and goes, and I am ready to imagine the crazy part."

"There is a trap-door, perhaps?"

"No, there is not. We have investigated that matter thoroughly."

"And the window?"

"Is fitted tighter than the marriage-relation."

"Are you sure?"

"Try it for yourself!"

"How can I get there?"

"Bend as others have done before you."

"I will see what I can do, for your sake, Miss Spicy."

She reached the door with a graceful stoop, and stepped down into the closet.

"There is no one here. Now, if it is possible, I will give the window a shake."

She worked her way along to it, nearly putting her hand through a band-box on the route, and found it just as Spicy had represented.

"When your dry-goods are taken out I should like to come in here again. If there is any sly panelling, I am just the one to detect it;" her voice sounded as if her lungs were packed in cotton batting.

She crawled back, scraping her head against the roof, upsetting her bonnet and wig. She looked as much like a ghost herself as a human being could, when she landed at last in the blue-room. I should have volunteered to regulate her head-gear if she had not towered so high above me. She seemed quite disconcerted when she looked in the glass, and saw her gray hairs on exhibition.

"It was hereditary in our family to

have the hair turn young," she remarked, by way of apology.

Spicy choked. I thought she was going to laugh, and stepped on her toes.

"Why don't you use invigorators and make it stay the right color?" she asked, quite gravely.

"Because they all contain sugar of lead, which acts as a slow poison to the system. I know a lady who has been made totally deaf, and another has lost her eyesight, through its use. The physicians say death is frequently traced to the same cause."

"Horrible! But why not let the hair look as it will? I see no need of dyeing it or covering it up either! I like white hair for my part. I should not wonder if it was all in vogue some day. If the fashion ever does come round, I shall be the first one to dye mine white or gray color!"

Miss Terrapin was getting her locks and puffs and braids all straightened by that time.

"Really," she said, "about that ghost or whatever she is, I am a good deal puzzled, I must confess. She looked to me like a thing of flesh and blood, and yet her disappearance has a savor of the supernatural. By-the-way, have you ever been into that gift-book store on Randolph Street? They will sell you a book as cheap as you can get it anywhere else, and let you draw a prize. They have silver and jewelry and gold-pens and the like, and, last week, one day, I thought I would try my luck, and I got this thimble! It looks like gold, and wears just as well."

We all took it and examined it, and passed judgment upon it.

"Did you notice the ghost's hand? Wasn't it skeletony? Talking about the thimble reminded me of it, for she had on a very handsome gold thimble."

I had not seen it, neither had Spicy.

"It was on her right hand, and she held the scroll in her left," continued Miss Terrapin. "I am sure I shall never forget her. When Miss Spicy is fairly away, I will come and dig into the mystery. You see I am good for most any thing. If there is a ghost indeed, we will make sure of it, and find out whose murdered bones she represents."

"Good for you, Miss Terrapin! I will remember you in my will!" exclaimed Spicy.—"Be sure and write me all about it, Meddie. It will make such a nice variety for me in dull New York; something for me to tell the girls after the rooms are dark, you know!"

Years afterward, on a never-to-be-forgotten night of horrors, both Spicy and Miss Terrapin were plunged into the abyss of knowledge which they so much coveted, and the mournful mystery of the ghost-closet was unriddled, to their shocked and awe-stricken comprehensions.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRIP TO NEW YORK.

OUR trip to New York was in most respects a pleasant one. It rained when we arrived, but we found a close carriage, and were driven directly to Miss Gilbert's. We were shown into an elegant parlor, and in a few minutes kindly and cordially welcomed by the lady herself. The room assigned to Spicy was on the fourth floor, and she was to have

three young-lady companions. They were not expected for a week, so I stayed with her until the next day. Three teachers, all ladies of culture, met us at the dinner-table, and the bill of fare was so tempting that I was in a happy frame of mind, when we adjourned to the family sitting-room for prayers. Miss Gilbert questioned Spicy about her music, and asked her to play. She complimented her on her proficiency, and suggested one of the most popular masters.

It was my desire that she should finish her course and graduate in two years, and Miss Gilbert saw nothing whatever to prevent. I administered the usual parental caution about never allowing the young lady to go in the street alone, and expressed myself decidedly opposed to her making any gentleman acquaintances. Miss Gilbert gave me a digest of her rules and regulations, with which I was well pleased, and after saying a great many affectionate things, and giving continual advice from the time we went to our room until we left it the next morning, I bade my darling good-by for a year. She shed a few tears, they were always ready to flow at her bidding; but she should be perfectly contented, she said, as soon as her trunk came, it would be such fun to take out all her new things, and stretch them round in the closets, and arrange the ornaments on the bureau.

"What ornaments, deary? I did not know as you had brought any."

"Oh, yes. My brush and comb, and ink-bottle, and my picture of Fred Gildersleeve."

"Spicy to the last," I said, squeezing and shaking her. "You know,

though, you are not to flirt with anybody."

"Not even with Fred Gildersleeve! Now, that is too much, Meddie! I have your kind permission to hunt for him, and if I should happen to find him I should be compelled to shake my pocket-handkerchief or give some sign. Could not help it. I have known him a long time. He is the one for me, who sticketh closer than a brother."

"If you should find him! Very well. Wait till you do and then write to me," I said. "Meanwhile if that old, musty picture is any comfort, adore it to your heart's content."

"Yes, 'em. That is what I shall do. Good-by—good-by—good-by!"

And I good-byed until my eyes were as rainy as my sister's.

I returned to Albany for a few days, but I was restless until I was in my little home again. It was a trifle quiet and still without either Leonardus or Spicy, but I managed to fill up my time. Bright was at the age when children develop fast, and his cunning ways were extremely fascinating. I dipped into charities, and church festivals, and musical *soirées*. The autumn was remarkable for pleasant days, and December appeared without any great Chicago freeze. I could not make up my mind to pass the holidays alone, so I sent out some invitations and prepared to entertain company.

Spicy wrote me regularly every week. A few extracts from her letters will reveal the tenor of her life in New York. From one, under date of October 7th, I clip the following:

"I am just from the conversation-

hour. I forget whether I have told you what that is or not, so here goes. We take our work, embroidery or stockings to mend according to our proclivities, and go down to the back-parlor, where we meet mademoiselle and chat an hour in French—*real* French, as Mrs. Wing used to say about her furniture. You remember, don't you, how we called there just after her new house was built, and about her taking us up-stairs and telling us such and such articles were *real* rose-wood, and those wardrobes were lined with *real* cedar? I suppose she thought we had been accustomed to imitation all our lives, as she had. But about our French. I cannot help thinking that if a Frenchman were to drop in among us he would take us for *real* Greeks! I improve some, but I am positively disheartened about ever becoming a celebrated linguist. This is a good school, but I have discovered that it requires native genius to be a good scholar. We are particularly well drilled in the proprieties. Daily lectures free. The chief heads are: to rise and give elders the easy-chairs, bow out of a room backward, pause when any one else is speaking, and never ask for butter the second time. My three room-mates are expected to-morrow. Their names are Miss Muffet and Miss Tuffet and Miss Buffet, as near as I can find out. My present anxiety is to know who will be entitled to the first chance at the wash-stand! Perhaps we will draw cuts, or render courtesy to age, or submit the question to a council of arbitration! What an aggravation to have a front-room on Fifth Avenue and not be allowed to go within three feet of the window! I hear the drum beat, and a

band of soldiers are passing, and yet I cannot look out without getting one of those horrid black marks! As a sort of let off to my pent-up emotions, I have suspended Fred Gildersleeve by a blue ribbon in the middle of the window, to see for me."

The next was under date of October 9, 1862:

"The subject of my to-day's letter is *space*. It seems just now as if it would be the subject of all my future correspondence. Oh, for a cot in the wilderness or a spot to call my own! Send me your ghost-closet, and be my noble benefactress. Do I want the ghost, too, did I hear you ask? . Certainly, if she wants to come, for, I dare say, she would not try to monopolize my pegs with her clothes. If you believe, or if you don't, I have but two pegs! Just to think of it! But two pegs! There are but eight pegs in all, and, of course, I get my share; but, is it not dreadful? Then I only have one bureau-drawer, and my trunk is in the sub-cellar, five flights of stairs away!

"Miss Muffet was here last year, and says she got along very well after the first week, although full four-fifths of her clothes she did not see until spring! Miss Tuffet will manage, I guess, because she has not but three dresses with her, and one is always put away anyhow; but she grumbles awfully about room for her bows, for it is one of her hobbies to have one for every day in the year and two for Sundays. Miss Buffet is in the same wretched condition that I am. She has brought an elephantine cargo, and has no place to put it and no chance to wear it. We have enough between us

to start a ready-made clothing-store in Kansas or California. What could Miss Terrapin have been thinking of? And it strikes me as absurd to have so much made-up outside of New York anyhow, for when we get here it isn't quite the thing, with all due deference to Miss Terrapin, and, if it has got to be put over until next year, why, worse and worse! Miss Muffet says we don't need much at school, and I begin to think she is right. Miss Gilbert wishes to see us plainly dressed. She says too much dress is in bad taste. I thought I would be stunning one Sunday afternoon, and appeared down-stairs in my blue silk, and was sent straight back to take it off! That was while my trunk stood by me, like a friend in trouble. No danger of any such reproof hereafter. I shall wear my mouse-merino till I tear or burn it, if it is until I graduate. My water-proof hangs with my cloak upon one peg, and my black-silk dress, blanket-shawl, and umbrella, assuage the loneliness of the other.

"There is an elegant young man sits near us in church. He often steps back and waits while we pass down the aisle. Don't worry, Meddie; I practise the Christian graces and never look at him. I am going to grow up like Miss Terrapin, the good old spinster! The only place where I have looked for Fred Gildersleeve yet has been in the 'Directory.' He was not there, but Miss Muffet, who is our oracle, says that the first people in New York never are there. Hark! the study-bell! By-by, Meddie! Don't forget to send me some jelly-cake before Thanksgiving."

We had some distant cousins living in New Jersey. The two young ladies

in the family were shining lights in fashionable society. When they heard that Spicy was at Miss Gilbert's school, they called and invited her to spend the holiday vacation with them. I had at first objected, as we were very slightly acquainted with the Gladstones, and I considered my sister much too young for the round of gayety such a visit would involve. But I was finally induced to consent, provided she was treated under all circumstances as a school-girl.

She wrote me but once while there, but was enthusiastic in her description of the entertainments and amusements, which she was enjoying with a great relish. I was too busy to notice the length of time which elapsed between her letters, but I was reminded of it afterward when a very full double sheet came at a moment when I was binding up a sharp cut in dear little Bright's forehead. He had fallen down-stairs, and Nursy Brown had been cut to the heart for having left him to get a glass of water. Two wounded ones, the latter the most seriously of the two, and, with an ashen face down which great scalding tears were trickling, she gave unerring evidence of a common humanity. I made her lie down on the bed, and in the rocker by her side I soothed and hushed the little one. When all was quiet, I broke open Spicy's letter and read aloud:

"DARLING MEDDIE: I could not help it! The days slipped away so fast, and I had so little time to myself. I will not neglect you any more if you will be forgiving. I am back in my school safe and sound, and we have soup on Mondays and fish on Fridays as usual. The New-

Year's ball was a prodigious affair. Cousin Sue wore diamonds and point-lace, and was the belle of the evening. I was the country miss in white muslin, with a pink tunic trimmed with down. Cousin Julia was sick, and did not go. That is why I did not mention her before myself—according to Miss Gilbert.

"I expected to keep the wall-flowers company, talk with the mammas, and see how the ladies managed their trails, and was perfectly aghast when I found, before the end of the first half-hour, that little me was engaged for every dance! I suppose it was out of respect for my grand relations. I got very much excited with the exercise, and my cheeks were burning as if full of live coals, when, just as one of the sets broke up and my partner was escorting me to a seat, a gentleman was introduced to me. I didn't catch the name, but it sort o' rattled off like *Gildersleeve*! I was so confused I did not know what to do with my hands or eyes, and, after asking me to dance and I, of course, declining—oh, how sorry I was that my card was full!—he walked away, and I never noticed until that moment that it was the same gentleman who goes to our church, and whom I have told you about before. I saw him several times afterward, but he was always devoted to some lady, and never noticed me again. I tried to imagine that he was the original of my picture, but I did not see much resemblance, if the truth must be told. He is a great deal the handsomer of the two. I pointed him out to Cousin Sue and inquired if she knew him; but no, only she said he was the most distinguished-looking gentleman in the room. I was

in despair. But my little romance exploded as we were getting into our carriage to go home. I heard somebody shout, 'This way, Hildegroove, this way,' and a tall figure ran past, whom I recognized as my hero.

"The morning before I came back to New York, I drew the window-shade up about daylight and found it raining. I slept with Cousin Sue, and she must have been trying to join the two parts of a dream together just then, for she mumbled:

"'You can wear my overshoes and umbrella.'

"'How do you wear umbrellas?' I asked.

"That thoroughly waked her, and she laughed.

"'You can wear my overshoes and water-proof, if you like that any better.'

"'What, when they are a mile too big for me!'

"'It won't matter; no one who knows you will be out so early.'

"As I had none of my own with me, there was no alternative, and as soon as breakfast was over I was so well rigged out that I might have journeyed to Jericho without getting damp. Cousin Walter was my escort. We had to wait on the corner a few minutes for the car—a Jersey fashion when it rains—and then found it filled and dripping. I didn't mind standing, for it was not far to the ferry. But we were kept there waiting for the ferry-boat a long time. Some train was just in, and a hearse was in waiting. Walter made inquiries, and told me that it was the body of Brigadier-General Lewis Vance, who had been killed in a skirmish near Fredericks-

burg, Virginia, and was being conveyed to Boston for burial."

I stopped reading and looked sharply at Nursy Brown, but her face was covered with the corner of the pillow, and she gave no sign of interest or intelligence.

"So many passengers coming upon the boat from the steam-cars made it very crowded. Walter gave his seat to an old lady with a bundle, and stepped a little beyond me to speak to some one whom he knew. Before the boat was quite to the dock the crowd all pushed forward, and who should I see but my lord of the long name! He was quite a way off, and kept his distance; never once looked at me, and I was thankful!

"Oh, how muddy it was at the foot of Cortlandt Street! Black and slippery and soft, as if some one had been moulding grease into the soil for ages! It takes all the conceit out of the most pompous to go through it! Standing on some corner waiting for an omnibus, Cousin Walter did something to my water-proof. I thought he was shaking off mud, and told him he would have better luck when it got dry. He is a man of large ideas and few words, and I was not surprised that he deigned me no answer. He never thinks I am worth talking to. But who should I sit down beside in that very omnibus but Mr. Hildegroove, or whatever his name is! He lifted the nicest kind of a hat, and displayed beautiful wavy hair, and hoped I was quite well. Cousin Walter looked fire-daggers at me, but how could I help making my best manners back to him? Was there any sin in it? And how was I to know that Cousin Walter wanted

an introduction himself? and how could I have introduced a person whose name I did not know, even if I ought to have known it? I was terribly uncomfortable, with Cousin Walter's disapproving eyes fixed upon me from the opposite seat, but the gentleman said nothing more, and at last I landed at my school.

"Now, the funny part is to come. I received a note from Cousin Sue next day, telling me how Walter asked her when he got home what a tuck and a flounce was. She illustrated with her pocket-handkerchief.

"Well,' he says, 'if you expect me to be polite to that little Western girl, you must try to put some style on her. I was not at all pleased this morning with the fit of her outside garment, and succeeded in getting a tuck and a flounce into it, which was some improvement. A gentleman whom I often see in the gold-room recognized her in the stage. I suppose he has met her at some of the parties where she has been with you. He is one of the *hi-fa-lu-tin*, who always win in the money market, and the New-York belles esteem him a great catch. If he knew me, as he probably did, although we have no acquaintance, he must have thought I was in great business toting that little dowdy round!'

"Sue said she thought it was a good joke on Walter for being so puffed out with cheap pride. Between you and I, Meddie, he is a veritable coxcomb! But the water-proof! It had been hung down-stairs somewhere to dry, and I ran and got it to see for myself, and, true as gospel, it was pinned and hitched up in ever so many places! What a figure I must have cut!

"You will write to Leonardus about General Vance, won't you? I would if I knew where he was stationed. Was it not singular about my coming upon that hearse at the ferry?"

"We are going to have gingerbread for lunch. The bill of fare is coming up through the speaking-tubes. Miss Buf-fet has got a box from home—candies, and oranges, and sweetmeats, enough to keep the attending physician in business for a month to come, as Miss Muffet says. She is going to treat us this evening after the monitor has been round. Miss Gilbert has seen my picture of Fred Gildersleeve, and given me a little private advice. She says I am too young to love. Those are not her precise words, but that was the drift of them. No young lady should cherish a picture, unless it was of her brother, or some near kin. Books now, society in the future. I played melancholy and kissed Fred, and she said she must write to you on the subject. Good-by again, but only for a week. I will be as prompt hereafter as a man at the funeral of his wife.

"Your loving sister, SPROX."

Bright was fast asleep when I had finished reading, and so was Nursy Brown, as near as I could discover. I laid him on the foot of the bed and covered him up warm. The fire was getting low, and I put on some coal. Then I had my hands to wash. Nursy did not move. I never knew her to go to sleep before in the daytime! How strange! But she had had such a shock when Bright fell! No, I would not disturb her for the world!

I went and brought my portfolio to

the nursery to write to Leonardus. He was down on the Mississippi, and it took my letters a long time to reach him. He saw newspapers but seldom, so he probably had not heard of General Vance's death.

I had been scratching away for an hour, when Bright began to nestle, and then opened his eyes. I took him in my arms and talked and sang to him; the sun went down. Maggie came in and lighted the gas, and finally the dinner-bell rang! Nursy Brown had not moved. I must speak to her; she certainly would not care to sleep any longer. So, rising, I laid my hand on her arm.

"What is it?" she asked, without stirring.

"I thought you would like to have me wake you."

"Yes, I am obliged to you."

"I hope you are not sick?"

"No, thank you."

But she did not offer to rise. She did not look at me even.

"Shall I leave baby with you or take him with me?"

I asked the question deferentially, for she had settled all those little questions for so long that I never thought of interfering with her programme.

"Take him, if you please."

She had not come down for him at eight o'clock, so I carried him up to her. She was lying where I had left her, in the same position, except that her little beauty of a hand was clasping her pearl-white throat.

"You must be feeling badly? I will undress baby," I said, stopping by the bedside.

"Very well."

"Can't I do something for you?" I asked.

"No, thank you."

I was nonplussed; what should I do? Go away from her if she were suffering, without persisting in efforts to relieve her? I felt that I had been dismissed, but ought I to acknowledge the dismissal? Bright had no idea of such a thing if I had, and, as soon as costumed for the night, put in his voice effectively. His mamma did not stand on a par with his nurse in his youthful estimation.

"Please leave him with me," she roused herself to say, as I was trying to force him from the room against his will. He had carried his point, and was correspondingly mollified—even put his sweet lips out toward me for a make-up kiss. And so I left them.

She appeared next morning as usual, and attended to all her duties. I was out most of the day, and saw very little of her.

The following week I spent in Milwaukee, and after that I was very busy with a new society, which had been organized for the relief of soldiers' families; and blustering March, with all its cold and dust, was upon us.

I seemed to feel as if some great calamity was going to befall me. I was not subject to fits of depression, but spring months are hard to get over at the West unless one has an iron constitution. I tried to lay it to the weather, then I took some medicine for dyspepsia. I read all the war news before six o'clock in the morning also, to try to get up an appetite for my breakfast. Leonardus wrote often and hopefully. As yet, he

had not received a scratch in battle, and his health was excellent. But the affairs of the country were very much mixed, and there was no telling where our troubles would end.

How I did miss Spicy! But she would be with me all summer, after the middle of June! I counted the days until then.

I would try to cast off the clouds which were obscuring the brightness of my present—"Live them down," as Miss Terrapin often said. "Enjoy life as it passes, so as to be still young when you are old," is her motto, and, "Never borrow trouble until it comes," might be added with advantage.

I did not have to borrow it, my trouble came sure and swift, and far too soon! A note was left on my table one morning, which I read several times before I could believe the evidence of my own senses. It was from Nursy Brown.

"MY DEAR MRS. BELMORE: I have been trying for several days to nerve myself for the parting which cannot longer be delayed. Your baby has coiled himself into every fibre of my heart, and your own kindness will be gratefully remembered while life lasts. But Fate so wills it, and I have fixed the time for my departure on Thursday next. I could not bring myself to the point of holding any conversation with you on the subject, and, since I shall suffer most by the breaking of the ties which bind me here, I beg that you will not allude to the subject by word or note, while I remain under your roof.

"With sincere regard,

"NURS Y BROWN."

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. BELMORE CANNOT BE COMFORTED.

IT WAS as if my right arm had been amputated! I never knew, until she was gone, how much I was indebted to Nussy Brown for the home-comfort and peace of mind of the last year and a half. Bright had grown quite beyond me, knew better how his clothes ought to be put on than I did myself, was inclined to play horse with my sash-ribbons and curtain-cords, and could run the fastest and catch the hardest colds of any boy of two years in all North America. I employed a young, tidy-looking girl to take care of him, but to fill the place of the one I had lost was not among human possibilities.

And every portion of the house showed that there had been a change. The pictures hung awry, and the mantel-ornaments leaned the wrong way. The music persisted in getting at sixes and sevens, the books were no longer arranged on the shelves in the order of the volumes, the newspapers had a way of lying round where they pleased, and the cat slept on the parlor-sofa.

The cook, too, came to me for instructions, every morning, and, it was so tiresome to always keep the bill-of-fare filled out; besides, there was my linen to be looked over, and my silver to be counted, once a week. It was not that I was indolently disposed, or unequal to the task of managing my household affairs, but simply that the care had been taken from my shoulders, and so smoothly and skilfully managed, that the house had had the appearance of running itself. The very atmosphere was an aching void,

I could not reconcile myself to it easily. It was as if some portion of my life had gone out, never to return.

I wanted to make her a present before she left, since I could in no other way express my appreciation of her disinterested services. But I was at a great loss to decide what it should be. I hit upon various articles of dress, but rejected them immediately, for I fancied she would not receive any such gift from me. Finally, I decided to get Bright's picture taken on ivory, and the last thing before she passed over my threshold I placed it in her hands.

What a look she gave me!—so full of tender, regretful meaning!

"May God bless you!" she said, and that was all.

Bright cried for her every night and morning, and whenever there was a lull in his plays, during the day, for weeks. It kept my sorrow fresh in my heart, and, when my baby's birthday came round, I could not get up the proper measure of enthusiasm over it—not even when the little voice put in his queries:

"Ware Bight's birf-day? Bight's birf-day up-stairs? Baun dot Bight's birf-day?"

Spicy condoled with me as soon as she heard of my misfortune.

"I thought you would keep her forever, and that at her death she would declare herself an empress, and make us all prime-ministers' wives. All, means you and me, for what splendid representatives Leonardus and Fred Gildersleeve would be at court!"

"The little goose!" I could not help stopping to exclaim.

—"Every thing about her was

perfectly regal. The very sort of a *person* whom I should have taken off my hat to, if I had been a man. I do pity you from the bottom of my heart, Meddie. But you must consider how greatly blessed above other women you have been by having had her to live with you at all, instead of declaring yourself the most miserable of beings because she has left you. Where do you suppose she has gone? Sent her little, old, black trunk to the Great Central Depot, did she? Eastward bound! If I had been there, she would not have got off without some quizzing; but, as you say, if she had a secret to keep, she would keep it to the death, and all my feeble ingenuity would probably have failed to surprise it out of her.

"We have had the greatest time with our gas! It gave such a splendid light in the first part of the winter! But for weeks and weeks it has been worse than any tallow-candle! We could not see to study by it, and had to go to the school-room, and, if we wanted to write a composition or a letter in the solitude of our apartments, it could not be done, and Miss Tuffet could not say her prayers (she is an Episcopalian, and reads them), so we appointed ourselves a committee of investigation to find what we could find. And what do you guess we did find? Cotton stuffed in the burners! A specimen of New-York economy! And what do you guess we did? Pulled it out, every speck, and put it in a bottle for a keepsake! Would not you have done the same? We have light enough for a million now, and, if it gets dim, we shall know the remedy hereafter.

"I think Miss Gilbert is a gem of a woman, and not a grain too strict, for

we are a hard set to manage. But, Meddie dear, what is it that makes poor, sinful mortals always want to go by the rule of contraries? For instance, it is a capital offence to read novels. I never cared for them before, but, since I have heard so much said about it, I can't pass a paper-stand without my feet begin to twist, and I sometimes hinder the whole procession long enough to see if there is a yellow cover in sight. We send Bob, the colored boy, to buy them for us, and, as he cannot read a word, he selects according to color? We hide them in our beds and devour them while the world is dreaming. We used to buy our own candles, and squeeze into the closet, and take turns about reading aloud, but since we have saved the institution such a bill of expense on gas, we consider ourselves entitled to a *bonus*, so now we pin all our black dresses up to the window and wedge the cracks of the door, and turn the gas up as high as it will go, and have a gay time.

"We have just had a fast-day—meetings in the churches to pray for colleges. I suppose they got through with primary and boarding schools long ago, and that is why we had bread-pudding for dessert as usual. Our monthly holiday was last Saturday, and nearly all the teachers, as well as the girls, had some place to go and visit, and it was stupid enough for Miss Buffet and me, who were left behind. So what did we do, but ask Miss Gilbert for some one to take us to Stewart's, to buy some gloves? We were just out, hadn't a pair to our hands, could not go to church the next day unless we were supplied (don't you ever tell of it, but we gave all we were possessors of, that





“ We stared at it with eyes and mouths wide open ! ”

very morning, to little Bob to distribute among his sisters and friends). It was the exact truth that we were telling!

"We knew that Miss Gilbert had no teacher to send with us, but we hinted that the house-keeper would do just as well; we would recompense her for the trouble, of course. Miss Gilbert reluctantly consented, and charged us to be back before lunch, which we faithfully promised. The house-keeper is a kind of Miss Terrapin—believes just as anybody else does that she is with. Not that Miss Terrapin has no mind of her own!—I ought not to say that, particularly after that ghost-hunt!—but is agreeably inclined to what she thinks you most agreeably inclined. Her name is Dobbs. Whenever we complain, Dobbs is on our side. If we want to pretend sick to get rid of a lesson, she always declares it is mean for us to be kept in our rooms and be fed with tea-and-toast, and have a doctor called in. If we are late to a meal, she always puts in a word of commiseration about the unfairness of the rule that we must take it cold. Yes, she was just the person we wanted with us that day. We whispered something in her ear in the stage, and she nodded acquiescence. We bought our gloves, and an extra pair for Dobbs. Then we steered for Delmonico's.

"Such a lunch as we ordered! And how the waiters bowed and run for us! Miss Buffet was for calling for every dish on the bill-of-fare that was new and strange to her, for, she said, it was a great educational opportunity, and we ought to embrace it. But I had serious objections to venturing beyond my depth. As it was, our table was full!

An odd collection of goodies! But we enjoyed them, and so did Dobbs. I did not know how I should ever manage to get my ice-cream down, I had eaten so many other things, and Miss Buffet suggested that I had better stand up. No, I would rather Dobbs should eat it for me; and she did without the formality of an objection.

"One could eat three or four such stingy little dishes,' she said.

"I thought she would get along with *two*, and didn't take the hint. Last of all came the bill, on a silver salver! We stared at it with eyes and mouths wide open! We thought there must be some mistake. We had not counted the cost. But we did count our change, and found we had seven dollars and fifty cents between us, and were two dollars short even then! If that amount of money had been eaten it must be paid, else they might detain us as impostors! What would Miss Gilbert say, if it should ever come to her ears? We wondered if such things were published in the papers! We might send Dobbs home for the money, but, if we did, she would surely lose her head for leaving us in a restaurant alone! One of us might go? What! One of Miss Gilbert's pupils ride in a car by herself! Then we two go together?

"No, we were in a worse predicament than the man who wanted to get his fox and geese and bushel of corn across the river, and could not take but one at a time. We wished we had stayed at home. We wished we were anywhere but where we were.

"We carried on our conversation in low tones, for the waiters kept hovering about, as if they suspected something

wrong. The longer we sat there, the more embarrassed we became, and the less prospect there seemed of getting out of our dilemma.

"At the table next us, near the window, two gentlemen had been feeding on one small quail ever since we came in. I sat so that I could not see them very well; but Dobbs, who had a full view, had once or twice remarked that it was sheer affectation for grown-up men to pretend that they had such delicate appetites! It did not interest me then so much as it has since. The one with his back toward us rose suddenly, turned round and put out his hand, and said:

"'Good-morning, Miss Merriman. I am happy to meet you again,' and then walked directly into the street.

"I had as a matter of course acknowledged the courtesy by shaking hands with him, and he was gone before I had collected my senses enough to discover that he had left in my palm—what do you guess? A neatly-folded two-dollar bill!

"O, Meddie! I almost died with mortification! I shall never want any more surreptitious lunches. There was nothing to be done but pay the bill and get away from that horrid place! The mercury was down to zero, but I was in such a heat that, as soon as I got home, I shut the furnace-register, and took the coldest kind of a bath. It did no good whatever, although I almost made the water sizzle when I got into it. Miss Gilbert was out, and there was no one to make a memorandum of the date of our return. Was not that lucky? But how am I to get that two dollars back to Mr. Hilderberger? I must do it some-

how. I have written half a dozen pretty little notes and torn them up again, and finally concluded to inclose my simple card, with the two dollars wrapped round it, in an envelop, and not say a thing. But I don't know his name for sure, and I don't know where he lives; and how shall I ever get it to him? I might ask Cousin Walter, perhaps, but I don't expect to go over there again before the summer-vacation, and if I should write a note, and tell him the circumstances, he would be sure to report me at headquarters, and have me put in a strait-jacket, for he is the most finikin of mortals. Do you suppose I can give it to him while we are coming out of church? I brush very near him sometimes. And then, what if anybody should see me do it? Death and imprisonment! Death first, and the middle-room without any windows afterward! I should not mind it so much, only I should be tortured into confession, and have to bring Miss Buffet and Dobbs to grief with me! They advise me to let the two dollars slide, but I won't. It shall go back whence it came, if it takes me till I am as old as Methuselah to get it there! But I will try to be cautious, for I am not disposed to get into any worse snarl. Shower down a little good advice upon me, Meddie. I will take it, whether it be sweet or bitter, without a wry face. I have put Fred Gildersleeve into a paper box, and laid my Bible on the top of it, until this two-dollar affair blows over.

"Write soon to your

"SUFFERING SPICY."

Miss Terrapin came to see me often,

and always brought some new fashion with her. It was a diversion, and I encouraged her in doing so. One day she spoke of a customer, a charming lady, who paid her bills in advance, and was such a model of elegance in her tastes.

"She abhors trimmings, but brings me the richest goods in the market to make up plain, and never wears blue," she said, one day.

It was in May or June, the latter part of the one, or the fore part of the other. I remember, because she was fitting me out to go for Spicy.

"That is unusual," I replied. "I have known several ladies who were sworn enemies to green, but blue is a favorite color. Few reject it altogether."

"It would be exceedingly becoming to her, I am sure," continued Miss Terrapin. "But there is no use in saying a word. Every thing is gray, black and gray, except two or three white wrappers for home-wear. She has a large property. I never knew it until yesterday, but she owns the block which my shop is in, on Lake Street. She asked me what rent I paid, and, when I told her, she remarked: 'That is too much to impose upon a woman. It shall be attended to.' She inherited the property from an uncle, old Judge Shubill, of Detroit—"

I interrupted her by a start, and the question—

"What is the lady's name?"

"Vance, Mrs. I. E. Vance, her card reads."

"Where does she live?"

"Just below you here, on the avenue. Not more than two blocks, or a

block and a half. Why? do you know her?"

"Certainly not. But I have heard of her."

And then I checked myself, for it did not seem right to gossip with a person of Miss Terrapin's well-known gossipy character, about the sacred secrets of a stranger, which had come to my knowledge in such a singular manner. She was curious. Where had I heard of her? How had I heard of her? What had I heard of her? Was she a widow? How long had she been a widow? Had she any children? And many more questions of the same sort, she plied with practised dexterity. Some I answered by asking others, the real Yankee dodge, as Leonardus used to say, and some I otherwise evaded. But upon the whole I gained more information than my dress-maker, and congratulated myself that she had nothing new to tell her next customer, from having discussed the subject with me.

But I wrote Leonardus a long letter that evening, and told him the news.

"How I should like to call upon her! but it will never do, unless I meet her somewhere first, for I cannot refer to your acquaintance with General Vance without tearing open a terrible wound," was one of the closing clauses in the epistle.

Although it was late when I finished his letter, I could not seek my pillow until I had dashed off a few lines to Spicy. I could well imagine how she would clasp her little hands together, and exclaim, "Miss Terrapin forever!" I told her in the same sheet what day to expect me, and enjoined it upon her to

be all ready, even to the strapping of her trunks, as I was unwilling to leave Bright any longer than necessary.

Miss Terrapin volunteered to come and sleep in the house while I was away. I accepted her, for I could not put my finger on any one else more acceptable. That expression, translated into broad English, signifies that I prefer as a rule to open my doors to the intimate relationship of such people as will not count the long stitches in my towel-hems, and read all the letters that happen to lie around loose.

I started at night; ten-o'clock train on the Michigan Southern Railroad. Put baby to sleep first, and had a spell of the heartache. No more ease for me now, when I left him behind. Took a sleeping-car of course, and lay awake all night. Had a sick-headache next day, and was sullen to the lady who was so selfish as to crowd into the seat beside me. Emptied my lunch-basket out of the window, all but an orange, which I gave to a little boy, who would persist in pounding me on the shoulder. I thought it would take up his attention for a while, but he only struck me with the fruit. He stood on his mother's lap, and she, no doubt, thought it a pity to interfere with her darling's happiness. I looked round, and the child uttered something between a screech and a groan, and I saw that he was deaf and dumb! How my feelings changed! My heart went out in one broad gush of sympathy for the afflicted pair, for I saw at the same moment that the mother was a deaf-mute also! She was fair to look upon, and her face beamed with intelligence. I knew a little of the language,

and commenced a conversation, which we kept up until our midnight arrival in New York. Her husband was with her, a fine-looking gentleman, and, as they were going to the St. Nicholas as well as myself, he kindly took me under his charge.

In the morning, early, I was at Miss Gilbert's door. The school had closed three days previously, and Spicy was the only one of the pupils remaining. She had obeyed my instructions, and her trunks stood in the hall. I settled all her unpaid bills, expressed my thanks to Miss Gilbert for her kind and motherly care of my sister, drank a cup of tea in her parlor, as I declined lunch, ordered the trunk sent to the depot in time for the Western evening train, and fancied my duties all and well discharged, when Spicy caught hold of my arm:

"One thing more, Meddie; come upstairs, please."

I climbed those long four flights, and reached the sky-parlor panting.

"I hope it is something important, after all this trouble," I said.

"Indeed it is! I want you should get this two dollars to Mr. Hildedragon. I never can go to Chicago without it is paid! I did not know debts were such awful things before! It spoils every moment of my life!"

"But how do you expect me to do it?"

"I don't know at all! You are so clever you will be able to hatch up a way, I am sure. Go to Cousin Walter and make believe something, so as to find out where the gentleman lives or has an office, and then go and give it to him yourself, or hire a boy. Oh, dear!

don't shake your head, you are my sister, and I have nobody else to ask."

"It is a difficult task. You forget that I am just as much of a stranger to Walter Gladstone as to Mr. Hilde-dragon! Seems to me you called him by a different name from that when you wrote to me about it?"

"I dare say; I don't know what it is. It almost kills me."

"What, the name?"

"No. I can't stand any ridicule, Meddie. Please, oh, please, get this two dollars to him! I am so ashamed of myself for ever having got into such a fix that I cannot endure the sight of money. He passes us nearly every Sunday as we march up the avenue to church, and I don't dare to look up, nor ask a question of a single soul about him, though of course there is no one at the school who knows him from Adam, if I were to ask! But I get red in the face every time I hear a footstep behind us that sounds like his, and when he turns his head in church I give little hateful starts, and look off in some foreign direction, just as if I expected he were going to say, 'You owe me two dollars!' I can't live so any longer!"

"It is rather hard, deary," I said, throwing my arm about the pretty, rounded figure at my side, and imprinting a kiss or two upon the rosy lips which were pleading with such genuine earnestness for an impossibility.

"You will have to make the best of a bad bargain, for all I can see, though. Mischief brings its own reward, don't it? Who will give away gloves again for the sake of a shopping-expedition, I wonder? I cannot help you. The two

dollars you will have to keep until such time as you can return it in a suitable manner."

"That time never will come, Meddie. It is weeks since it has been scorching all the linings out of my pocket-books! It is as much worse than the ghost of blue-room notoriety, as the ghost was worse than Miss Terrapin's wig. Dear, dear, what shall I do?"

"Forget it now, say your good-bys, and we will go. We are to have an early dinner at the hotel."

She was bathed in tears when she put her arms round Miss Gilbert's neck for a parting kiss.

"Our young ladies don't leave for their homes with joy-beaming countenances, as they do in some schools," remarked the good lady.

"No, indeed! We leave too many unpaid debts behind us," blubbered Spicy.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. BELMORE'S RETURN TO CHICAGO.

EIGHT o'clock on a bright June morning and a great black train, with its fiery eye and living load, rumbled slowly over the waters of Lake Michigan, in front of the avenue where stood my unpretentious little home. How eagerly Spicy and I, from one of the sleeping-car windows, searched with our eyes through the dense foliage which surrounded it for some sign of life! But for a moment. Into the depot we plunged, and fathers of families, mothers and daughters, children and nurses, small boys and single men, elderly maidens and pretty widows

—with their satchels and bundles and wraps—simultaneously arose, and pushed and struggled for precedence in the dark aisle, and jostled each other on the steps, and scattered up and down the platform, hurrying into stages and hacks, and meeting friends with affectionate greetings, while trunks banged from the baggage-car in rapid succession, and check-numbers were shrieked in the universal din.

It was not far, but it would take us much too long to walk, so we stepped into the nearest coach, and were driven rapidly to my own door.

"There is Miss Terrapin! What a figure is hers! Look, Meddie! She reaches the roof as she stands on the northeast veranda! What should I do with myself if I were as tall as she is!" exclaimed Spicy, as we approached.

"There is my baby, too; so every thing is all right," was my remark, as the driver snapped open the door of the carriage to let us out.

"Any news?" I asked, as I sat down to a steaming breakfast.

"There are some letters for you in your room," replied Miss Terrapin.

I sent Maggie up for them. One from Leonardus; one from Aunt Minerva, asking us into the country for a week; and one from—it took me some time to find out who.

"The ladies from five or six different States have held a meeting since you left, for the purpose of trying to organize a sanitary-fair committee," said Miss Terrapin.

"Ah! now I understand. This letter is from Mrs. Waldemar, of Milwaukee, asking me to interest myself in the en-

terprise. But I cannot—positively cannot. It will take me away from my home too much. And Master Bright cannot spare his mamma—can he, precious?" and I turned the little face, which had been nestling in my neck while I drank my coffee, up toward mine.

"Bright tan go, too?"

"Not very well. No, we will let the Sanitary Fair take care of itself this year, and we will remember the soldiers by packing a big box full of every thing that is good to eat, and shipping it straight to your papa, won't we, baby?"

"Me no baby! Me big boy—me humbug!" said the little one.

"He has had a new teacher for a few days," and I laughed and pinched his cheeks.

Miss Terrapin laughed too, and was evidently flattered.

"I don't wonder that Nursy Brown stayed with you so long, since I have had little Bright to amuse me. I am not partial to children generally, but I could not get away from him yesterday until four o'clock in the afternoon! And I should not have gone then only I had promised Mrs. Vance to fit a sack-lining, and I went down to her house a moment to do it. I told her what had kept me, and what a dear little fellow he was, and she seemed greatly interested, and asked me to come back and get him, so that she could see him. We dressed him up like a doll, and he did look too sweet for any thing! I knew you would be quite willing for me to take him anywhere I chose, and when Mrs. Vance expressed fears lest you should object to his being brought to a stranger's house in your

absence, I shut her up at once by explaining the terms of intimacy we were on, and how much you relied on my judgment in every matter of importance. I told her all about your antecedents; how your grandfather was the governor of a State and your father a member of Congress, and how your mother was once presented to the Queen of England, and how your husband's ancestors were related to the royal family, and what honors were being heaped upon him in the army now. I think she has very high notions, and I thought I would just give her to understand that some people are as good as others. She thought Bright was splendid, and held him in her arms a long time, and kissed him, and rolled his hair over her fingers to make it curl, and taught him to call himself *a humbug*. He remembers it, the little monkey. But I never know when to stop talking. I must go. I have been away from my shop now so long that very likely the mice are all at play. My things are up-stairs in Miss Spicy's room. I can get them. Don't rise. I shall be in to see you often. Let me know a few days beforehand when you want your dresses made. Good-morning."

Spicy and I looked at each other after she was fairly on the sidewalk. We had a good many thoughts in common, which it was quite as wise to leave unsaid. Miss Terrapin was building her castles rather high, upon the strength of her importance to me in my daily walk and conversation. Yet, it was not so strange that she should after all, for I had the appearance and must have passed for a weak-minded woman, and my very dependence on her must have led her into

the adoption of her present theories. It would have been more pleasant not to have known how she was representing me and mine in the other houses where business took her, but some evils are necessary to our well-being.

"Who cares?" said Spicy, after a while. "Don't wear such a lugubrious face, my good sister."

"I was only thinking."

"So I supposed. But I would not think. I wish I could get a glimpse of Mrs. Vance."

"You probably will, as she must pass here very often if she lives so near us."

"How long did you say it was since she came to reside on this street?"

"I did not ask Miss Terrapin."

Days succeeded days in a round of pleasant occupations. Spicy was like a bird set free from a cage, and sang all the day long. I was happy to have her with me, and petted and laughed at her according to her moods. Some days she was in a severe fit of celibacy, and declared she should never marry. Men were too frivolous and exacting. No one worthy of the priceless treasure of her affections would ever be so fortunate as to discover their existence. Then out would come the picture of Fred Gildersleeve, and it would be wreathed with myrtle or forget-me-nots and hung on the knob of her bureau-drawer, or nearest the place where she happened to be sitting, and she would declare herself thawed out under the genial influence of his perpetual smile, and ask how many pairs of pillow-cases it would be necessary for her to embroider with a monogram before she should be ready for her wedding-trip!

We went out to see Aunt Minerva after a while, taking Bright with us. Phil was there, too, with his mother. A house full of guests in the country create a succession of enjoyments, and we allowed not a moment to go to waste. Spicy distinguished herself, as she had done on a previous occasion, by her horsemanship, and she grew more plump and rosy every day. Phil was always by her side, whether in the little dog-cart or on the pony's back, and many a long, sunny morning they idled away beside a brook at the foot of the garden.

"Look at them!" said Aunt Hatty, one day as we were standing on the piazza. "Phil has found out who is the prettiest girl in Illinois, without offence to any of my other pretty nieces and friends present."

"What is he doing? Holding her hand!" exclaimed Aunt Minerva, adjusting her spectacles.—"Harriet, that is most too familiar for cousins. They must be spoke to about it."

Dinner was announced, and they did not come in directly. Uncle James went to the door and halloed to them. They did not move as rapidly after that as I have known people to do who were suffering with hunger.

"Hey, Phil, what you been about?" was Aunt Minerva's salutation, as he took his place at the table.

He dropped his eyes and appeared confused.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Uncle James. "I will stake a bushel of wheat that you've been picking clover-blossoms. None of that on my farm.—How is it, Miss Spicy?"

"I don't know, sir," and she blushed deeply.

"Oh, you don't! I thought you were there! But Phil sha'n't be teased in my house, nor you either. You are a nice little pair of thieves, although Phil is not so very little. I will see that Aunt Minerva don't disturb you; it is a good thing for relations to be relationy—ha, ha, ha!"

Phil prided himself upon his immobility and self-possession, and was gaining the ground which he had so unwarily lost. He bowed, admitting the joke, but showed very plainly that he did not think it was any great joke after all. Spicy did not smile, or otherwise indicate her appreciation of Uncle James's remarks. His humor was well known, as also his thorough good-nature, and it was hardly to be supposed that the young people had taken offence. But something had happened.

I questioned Spicy as soon as we were alone.

"I will tell you all there is to tell, Meddie, but pray don't ever mention it to a soul. I have piqued Phil. More than that, I think I have made him downright angry. You know I have always liked him, that is, I always found something to commend in him, although I have said so many times—and you have heard me say it—that he was fashioned out of very cheap material and inordinately vain. Since we have been here he has been trying to see how much foolish flattery I could stand, and he has found out. He has taken every opportunity to look straight into my eyes, and tell me I was *fair*, and all that, and I have looked it right back every time, and

told him he was *charming*. I thought it was a game I could play at as long as he could, but I never dreamed he was going to come the sentimental and make downright love!"

"And has he?"

"Yes, Meddie, this very morning; and I have crammed his heart all into those dainty gaiters he wears, and I dare say it aches, or he thinks it does."

"What did he say?"

"Every thing in the way of love-nonsense. How wishy-washy it all is, isn't it? Didn't it make you sick? I never shall get married if I have got to listen to such trash first!"

"The difference is whether you love or not."

"I can't understand it. Phil is a ninny! He might have known I did not care a pin for him! Do let us go back to Chicago to-morrow. I hate the country!"

We did not go on the morrow, because Phil strapped up his knapsack after breakfast and went to the depot. But a few days later we took the twenty-five-mile ride, and threw open our shutters once more.

Miss Terrapin discovered us before night. Spicy declared that she must have been hanging round in a balloon. Business was extremely dull with her. So many people had gone East, and to the mountains and lakes. Mrs. Vance was in Minnesota, and would not return until late in September. She had plenty of time to work for us. We had, however, much less for her to do than last year, for Spicy had become wiser since going to New York, and was determined on a limit to her baggage in the future.

"How long did you say Mrs. Vance had lived on Michigan Avenue?" I inquired.

"Several months, or—I really don't know how long she had been there before she called on me; but, judging from her conversation, I should say some time."

"You are about as definite as Mrs. Mudlaw, in giving a receipt for her potato-pudding," remarked Spicy.

"How was that?"

"Don't you know? Why, she said, 'If you wanted it large you must take more flour, or if you wanted it small you must take less.' And then about the butter, 'Some folks liked it short, and some folks didn't; if you liked it short you must put in more butter, but if you didn't like it short you must put in less.' And so with all the other ingredients, particularly the sweetening. And then as to the matter of baking, the time of keeping it in the oven must all depend upon the size of the pudding. It was so definite! And the pudding must have been so delicious when it was made right—that is, if you liked potato-pudding!"

Miss Terrapin laughed.

"Does Mrs. Vance live entirely alone?" I asked.

"Oh, no; she has an elderly lady, a Mrs. Chafferlee—sister, I think, or sister-in-law she must be, of Judge Shubill—with her. She always calls her 'Aunt Mary,' but I don't believe she is any relation of Mrs. Vance. Then Mrs. Chafferlee has a young son, a lad of nineteen or twenty, with her now."

"Call a young man of nineteen or twenty a *lad* do you?" exclaimed Spicy.

"He is not much more than a *lad* anyhow, although he is trying to raise a mustache, and wears a stove-pipe hat. He is at what I call the foolish age, neither man nor boy. Perhaps *lad* isn't the word to use, but a new one ought to be coined then."

"What else about Mrs. Vance?" asked Spicy.

"Nothing, only she is very charitable, has been round visiting all the different institutions, and they say she has donated something to each. She has an elegant carriage and drives in it every day."

I was notified, on one of the last days in August, that the house and grounds which I occupied had been sold, and the buyer paid his respects to me in the shape of a request that I should look out for another dwelling-place, and give him an opportunity to move away the old cottage, and erect three handsome white-stone edifices on its site. I at first objected decidedly, as I held a lease for months to come, but further interviews and a liberal compensation for the trouble at last reconciled me to the measure, but I was confident that I should never get so much attached to any other habitation. It really was a grievous trial to leave it. I regarded all its nooks and corners with daily-increasing affection, as the time drew near when I was to see them no more. Even the ghost-closet, which had been by all abandoned, put out a few expiring charms, and Spicy and I went in, and sat down on the steps, and talked over the thrilling incidents of which it had been the scene.

"And nobody has ever seen the ghost since that time, a year ago, when Miss Terrapin hung herself to oblige me?"

"No. The blue-room has hardly been used since. Miss Terrapin came a number of times in the autumn, on purpose, she said, to ransack for a solution of the mystery, but nothing ever came of it! Our last chance is gone, I suppose, now. If we move next week, the house will be rolled off at once, and, if it holds together to get there, will be rejuvenated, on a lot in the extreme southern portion of the city."

"Next week! Why, Meddie, to-day is Saturday, and you have not found a house, have you?"

"No, but Mr. Burton has volunteered to go to the north side with me on Monday, and he thinks I cannot fail to be suited."

The bell rang. In an instant, we were running at break-neck speed down the stairs, for it was Leonardus! Home for a fortnight! The great surprise of the season! Did not know he was coming until ten minutes before he started! Shouldn't have written if he had! Wanted to catch us amusing ourselves in his absence! Too bad we had got to move! But lucky he was on hand, for it would be just as well to buy a house now as any time. Would run over and see King, who had several for sale. Guessed there would be time before dinner. Would get a few *permits*, so that we could take an early look on Monday.

We were in a whirl of excitement from that moment until we were safely and comfortably quartered in a home of our own in North Chicago, not far from Rush Street, about three-fourths of a mile out. It was a corner two-story frame-house, with a French roof and cupola, square, and compact, and extreme-

ly modern. I had little or no personal trouble about the transit.

"A husband is such a handy thing to have round!" Spicy had said, and that explains every thing.

But it seemed almost cruel to keep him on the jump every moment of his stay among civilized people! I said so, more than once, and quoted my famous experience in the past, to prove my ability to lend a helping hand.

"You will have enough trouble yet before the war is over. Take it easy while you may," was how he silenced me.

The Dwight mansion was on rollers, and two-thirds of the way to the front gate, before we were out of it. Mr. Burton was anxious to get his houses up before the cold weather set in. A posse of men were laying the sewer, and another small army commenced digging the cellars that same morning. The original owner of the property came about nine o'clock, with artists and their instruments, to get a picture of the departing house. It was such a pity that they did not come sooner, before the foundation had been so uprooted and torn away! But they must have been people after my own heart, to have made the attempt at all. I had an affinity for them right away, and rendered them all the assistance in my power. I even used my eloquence to persuade the workmen to adjourn to the corner of Madison Street, and we suspended our own moving-operations for an hour. If I could have commanded the winds, I should have done still greater service, for the swaying of the branches spoiled one effort after another, until finally they were obliged to accept an impression, which fell far

short of their ideas and expectations. I stipulated for a copy.

Miss Terrapin came meanwhile and busied herself in scanning the division-line between the blue-room and the ghost-closet. As the house travelled, the closet remained and gaped in astonishment at the wonderful invention which had deprived it of its staff in old age.

"There certainly was never any way of getting out of that place except through the blue-room," she said, after standing on a table which had been tumbled out of the kitchen, and stretching her crane-like neck, until Spicy whispered to ask me if there was any danger of her head going up for want of ballast, and leaving her body behind!

The children from the streets, who had watched my pretty flowers all summer, with covetous eyes through the cracks in the fence, swarmed into the yard as the gates no longer swung on their hinges, and stripped it of its last beauty. A few days afterward, when I chanced that way, there was not a landmark left. Three cellars were completed, piles of brick and white marble covered the remaining lots, which had grown such rare shrubs and beautiful trees, and the hedge and the currant-bushes and the grape-arbor had disappeared. Thus passeth away the things of this world!

Leonardus found some friends going on to New York about the time that Miss Gilbert's school opened, and we placed Spicy under their charge.

It was the same day that Leonardus himself set out to join his command. My trials always came double.

"It is so fortunate for you that they do!" Spicy said. "Here are two now, and you will get over them both at once."

Bright felt strange in the new house, and teased incessantly, to be "tooked 'ome." I filled the nursery with toys, and did my best to make him happy and contented. The nurse was good and kind to him, but she had no tact or ingenuity whereby to devise ways and means to divert and entertain the little fellow. If he cried for the looking-glass, she brought him to me. If he got angry, and struck her over the head, she brought him to me. If he was sick or sleepy, it was all the same, she brought him to me—I must take the brunt. I made it a point to have her keep him in the open air as much as possible. She took him to walk in pleasant weather, and when it rained she drew him in his little carriage. Coming in, one afternoon, he ran to me, saying:

"Me humbug! me humbug!"

"Ah! what has reminded you of that?"

"Me humbug! me humbug!"

"Who has he seen, since he went out?" I asked of the nurse.

"Nobody, ma'am, but a lady in a carriage."

"Did she speak to him?"

"Yes 'em. She stopped by the sidewalk, and asked me to hand him to her a moment, and when it looked like rain she said she might as well drive round to where we lived, for we might get caught if we were very long on the way."

"And did she take you in also?"

"Yes 'em. I said I could walk, but she told me quite sharp-like, though it

was soft-spoken, that nurses never should let babies out of their sight with strangers, so I got in."

"How did she look?"

"Like a very nice lady. I don't think I ever saw a nicer lady."

"What did she say to Bright?"

"Oh, she held him on her lap, and asked him to tell her his name, and to kiss her, and some other things. I think she played with him a little, and called him a *humbug*. She told me that I must take good care of him."

"Is that all? Tell me every word."

"It is all I can think of. Oh, I believe she said Miss Terrapin brought him to see her once, last spring, and that he had grown very much since then."

"Mrs. Vance! It was Mrs. Vance!" I said to myself.

I wished I could see her. Perhaps the old mistrust in regard to her identity with Nursy Brown took possession of me for a brief moment; but, if so, I put it away. It could not be possible! Leonardus had set my mind at rest there, not only a year ago when he first told me Ida Everett's sad history, but last week when Spicy and I had mooted the subject again, and tried her case in our self-appointed court.

"No woman of Ida Everett's culture was ever equal to the voluntary withdrawal of herself from every past association without some compensating adjunct. She has remained concealed most effectually from the world, but she could no more have existed in such a servitude as Nursy Brown walled about her, than my wifey here, and what would be her success, think you, in such an undertaking?" were his closing arguments.

They had weight with me for several reasons—principally because men are supposed to know every thing—and Leonardus had seen Mrs. Vance while I had not.

Thinking it over and over, and revolving all the attendant circumstances in my mind until my brain was excited so that I could not sleep through the long hours of the night that followed, I determined upon paying a visit to Mrs. Vance, ostensibly to thank her for the interest she had manifested in my baby, but really to satisfy an aching curiosity to behold her face, which clamored, refusing to be dismissed.

At two o'clock the next afternoon, I found myself sitting in Mrs. Vance's parlor, and the servant had taken her my card.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. BELMORE VISITS MRS. VANCE.

My heart beat tumultuously. Every moment seemed an age. I scarcely observed the appointments of the room, which were of rare elegance, so intent was I upon the main purpose of my visit. I heard a rustle on the stairs! Ah, coming?—no, it was the servant. She stopped to say that Mrs. Vance would be down presently. Waiting, perhaps, to acquire self-control before appearing in my presence. No, no, I do not suspect her of being other than she is. But something was wrong with me, else why was I there, with my blood all agog? My restless eagerness was unlike myself. I had almost reached the limits of my endurance, when I heard her footstep on

the stairs, and in another instant she was holding one of my hands between both of hers, and saying, with a warmth of feeling not often made manifest by strangers:

"I am very, very glad to see you, Mrs. Belmore."

Her manner was simple and direct. She drew a large chair in front of me, and, before I could speak of my baby, she introduced the subject:

"Miss Terrapin prepared us to be acquainted months ago through your darling little boy, and I have been hoping, ever since then, that this pleasure might be vouchsafed me."

Her face, which was entirely colorless, did not strike me at first as wholly pleasing in repose, but it was singularly beautiful when animated in conversation. An inscrutable reticence, which might baffle the keenest observation when she was silent, disappeared and melted in the glow of pleasure which lit up every feature while she talked. She was a woman to stir and thrill and entrance the soul, to give stimulus to the intellectual nature, to rouse passionate tenderness in the heart. She chatted free and unconstrained upon the various topics which were agitating the city and country. Speaking of the approaching Sanitary Fair, she regretted her inability to take an active part in it, as it was her desire to live as secluded as possible, but hoped she should be able to donate her mite for the good of the soldiers. I was intoxicated with her sweet earnestness, and felt a new, strange bond beginning to tighten around me as natural and inevitable as any other fact in Nature.

Her eyes, of which I had heard so

much, were shining upon me with a transparent truthfulness in which I felt that I could rest. They were more than beautiful. Were they blue? I suppose so. Grandison Gildersleeve wrote to Helen that they were blue, and Leonardus had made the same assertion. But I would not like to have been placed upon the witness-stand and compelled to take my oath on the subject. I only saw a lovely woman, a very lovely woman, of an intense and susceptible nature, looking calmly from them through the vista of years which had been crowded with the most painful experiences. I did not think about their color, I simply basked in their light. Had I ever seen them before? I felt like a culprit to have asked myself that question. I had seen some very like them. None of that fire and life, however—would she pause in her conversation and let me have one more glimpse of her face in repose? No. She was too well-bred to give a guest an opportunity of studying the pattern of her carpet.

I tarried longer than the circumstances warranted to debate that old question to myself. But I arrived at no distinct conclusion. There was much in the voice and manner, as well as in the outline of features, that belonged to Nursy Brown. But, during the whole period of her life under my roof, I had never seen the upper part of her face but once. I remembered my impressions at the time, but is it possible to carry such a thing in one's mind and dare to assert an important opinion after so long an interval? How frequent are cases of mistaken identity! A lady-friend of mine once spoke to a gentleman

in the street whom she took for her own brother, and was followed home and subjected to an infinite amount of annoyance in consequence. Mrs. Vance betrayed no consciousness of acting a part, was handsomely though plainly dressed; her coiffure was elaborate, her style unquestionable, and I found myself upon leaving the house disabused of many of the theories with which I had entered it.

I urged her to visit me often. She said it would give her great happiness if I would allow her to come without ceremony, as she was not paying visits, and had declined all the courtesies of society since she came to Chicago.

"How long have you resided here?" I had the courage to inquire.

"In this house but a few months, in Chicago over two years."

We were standing by the parlor-door, our hands clasped, and looking directly in each other's faces when she made that remark.

"She is no more Nursy Brown than I am!" was my final decision, and much that occurred afterward tended to confirm me in that belief.

Miss Terrapin was delighted when she heard that I had called upon Mrs. Vance.

"It will be so pleasant for her to have you for a friend!" she said.

How kindly she always put things! I could imagine her making the same remark to Mrs. Vance, and with much better grace. It was certainly I who would reap the greatest advantage from an intimate friendship, if indeed such should be the result. I longed for some one, just such a one, to fill a niche in my heart, hitherto vacant. For five years

my husband had been my all in all, and until the breaking out of the rebellion our house had been one of the pleasant centres of a charming social circle, in the atmosphere of which we had expanded and brightened together. But he was away. My sister was away. I had ^{learned} to recognize the right of society to demand any portion of my time while our husbands and friends were facing the cannon's mouth, and was comparatively alone in the din and bustle of a great city. I had needs. A woman, graceful, adorned, and tender with womanliness, could supply them. I had unwittingly found her.

Mrs. Vance returned my call within the week. It was early one morning, and she proposed a drive out on the road to Evanston. Bright must go too, and she insisted upon holding him in her arms. Near the entrance to the old cemetery she paused, and, asking me to excuse her, disappeared in one of the greenhouses for a few minutes. When I got home, a charming bouquet of flowers on my library-table explained her errand.

It was about that time that the Sanitary Fair became the theme of all tongues, and attracted the attention of the whole loyal North. Such a *furore* of benevolence had never been known! Men, women, and children, corporations and business firms, religious societies, and political organizations, all vied with one another enthusiastically as to who should do the most, for the proceeds were to be devoted to the sick and wounded of the Southwestern hospitals, and what true heart could resist the appeal? The press lent its generous and

persistent aid, the rich gave of their abundance, and the poor withheld not from giving because of their poverty. The very air seemed magnetized with grand purposes and contagious generosity.

The Fair had been projected in the minds of two ladies, who had on several occasions visited the armies at the South, and seen with their own eyes what an immense amount of supplies were necessary to the recovery and comfort of the brave invalids and wounded men filling our military hospitals. If, by enlisting the people of the Northwest, they could raise ten thousand dollars, they believed it worth the effort. But they little dreamed how greatly it was to outgrow all their original calculations!

It was held on the last week in October and the first week in November, in Bryan Hall, which was transformed into a bazaar, rivalling those of the Orient in gorgeousness and bewildering beauty. A temporary structure was erected in the rear for the reception of the more bulky machinery, farmers' implements, etc., which were contributed. The Supervisors' Hall in the court-house was devoted to art and trophies, and a *curiosity-shop* it was indeed. A large hall in McVickar's Building was converted into a gallery of paintings, and the beautiful and rare works which were collected surprised those who had not kept pace with the growth of Chicago in culture and refinement. Many of the Chicago artists generously painted pictures for the occasion, and afterward donated them, and they were sold for good prices. Metropolitan Hall was devoted exclusively to evening entertainments. Its decorations

were such that it lighted up brilliantly. Festoons of red, white, and blue, glittering with gold stars, depended from the gallery; every iron column was fluted with white and red; while around the gallery were arranged mottoes expressive of faith in God, devotion to the country, and undying interest in her brave defenders. The proscenium was arranged with fluted decorations and festoons of national colors. At either side of the stage were busts of President Lincoln and Webster, while over the curtain hovered the national eagle, resting on a shield, grasping the stars and stripes in the talons of one foot, and the arrowy lightnings with the other. And every evening this spacious hall was crowded to its utmost capacity—concerts, tableaux, and lectures, alternating according to the pleasure of the caterer.

The Fair was opened by an inaugural procession which brought all the machinery of the great city to a stand-still. The day cannot be forgotten. Such a sight the West never saw before upon any occasion. Chicago was a vast theatre of wonders! From the earliest dawn of day the streets were thronged with people. Citizens hurried excitedly to and fro, and country-women with children, country-wagons with flags and banners, horsemen with colors tied to their bridles, chariots, civic orders, and military companies, horse and foot, drums beating, bands of music playing, and the roar of multitudinous voices in the streets, all combined to render it one of the most magnificent spectacles of the age! The house-tops were filled, and every pathway so jammed with human bodies that it was with great difficulty

that the procession, when formed, could make any headway. Such enthusiasm as accompanied it has rarely been witnessed. The people seemed to overflow with loyalty. Many of them had been silent till now, but their love for the old flag could no longer be hidden under a bushel. There was mighty eloquence in that sublime display.

On the court-house steps those who could get near enough listened to several speeches, and a salute of thirty-four guns, and then the multitude surged like tidal-waves toward the halls of the Fair.

The railroads ran excursion-trains each day, from different parts of the country, which brought crowds of large-hearted, loyal, whole-souled country-people, and from eight o'clock in the morning until ten at night there was no apparent diminution in the number of visitors during the whole progress of the Fair.

Dinners were one of its greatest features. Lower Bryan Hall was fitted up for that purpose. Dinners had for a long time been a feature of Chicago fairs. The materials for them were furnished gratuitously by the ladies of the city. Their names were recorded, as also the articles they would furnish, and the days when they would furnish them. Then the aggregate supply for each day could be ascertained. So many cooked turkeys, so many pieces of roast-beef, so many ducks, so many chickens, so many pies, so many puddings, so many gallons of milk, so many pounds of coffee, so many oysters, so many dishes of mashed potatoes, and other smoking-hot vegetables, etc. If the amount pledged was not sufficient, the dinner committee

could supply deficiencies. By some mystery of the *cuisine*, which it is not my province to divulge, from Iowa, Wisconsin, and other States, edibles came in ready for the table as hot as if they had just made their *début* from the bake-pan!

From one to two thousand gentlemen who usually lunched at a restaurant down-town, dined each day at the Fair, as elegantly and comfortably as if at their own homes. Six ladies took charge of each table through the entire two weeks. Two of them were to preside daily, one to pour the tea and coffee, and the other to entertain and supervise. They were the wives of Congressmen, professional men, editors, merchants, bankers, and millionnaires—none were above serving for the soldiers. Each lady furnished table-linen and silver for her table, and decorated it as her taste suggested. The table-waiters were the young ladies from the best families. They were—like the ladies who presided—attired in pretty white caps and aprons, trimmed and worn to suit the varied styles of the wearers. It was a novel scene!—the matrons behind their urns receiving all who came to their tables as they would honor guests in their own home—the graceful girls in their pretty uniforms darting hither and thither—the continual incoming of fresh trays, and baskets, and pails, laden with viands—the long line of carvers, one for each variety of meats, who had never before donned the white apron and knife of the department—and the crowds who would dine in this hall if they had to wait for hours for a place! It was animated, unusual, picturesque; a department which required great executive skill in its man-

agement, and none was more popular or successful.

I resisted the pressure upon my heart and purse strings until both gave way, and I was precipitated into this pandemonium of the epicures. "If I must work in the Fair, I choose the dining-hall," I had incautiously remarked to one of the managers early in the autumn, and consequently I was enrolled for duty.

"I shall not attend the Fair, but allow me to furnish the decorations, the silver, the fruit, and the flowers for your table," said Mrs. Vance.

I accepted her offer gladly, for my stock would make but a poor show. It was all there, ready for use, on that famous Monday morning. An elegant, solid service, rare and costly—the most elegant and rare and costly that graced the Fair. And such flowers as came fresh every morning!—the gems of Chicago greenhouses—and her fruit was the choicest, and the rarest, and the ripest, that the market afforded. My table thus was the great centre of attraction. Distinguished parties were all escorted to it, and when the Governor's dinner came off it was the one selected for their special entertainment.

I did not see Mrs. Vance during the whole two weeks of the Fair, but I felt her presence continually. Sometimes Miss Terrapin hovered round with commissions for her.

"Mrs. Vance has seen by the papers that there are some very beautiful specimens of gypsum-work from Grand Rapids. Will you tell me where to find them?" Or: "Mrs. Vance has heard that from Portland are some exquisite

Algæ, which she would like to purchase." Or: "I must hurry, for I have promised to take Mrs. Vance some of the Indian-work from Green Bay—and then I am to go to the court-house to select some minerals."

Volk, the sculptor, was intrusted with the choice of some fine pictures for her, through my recommendation, and she sent money to me in several instances to drop round where there were to be articles raffled off. She took Bright to drive nearly every pleasant day, and kept my parlors as cheerfully adorned with flowers as my table at Bryan Hall.

The great pioneer of all the Sanitary Fairs which honored our country, and encouraged the worn veterans on the battle-fields, came to an end on Saturday, November 7th, by the giving of a sumptuous dinner to all the soldiers in Camp Douglas, the Marine Hospital and City Hospital, and the Soldiers' Home; and Anna Dickinson uttered the words of cheer and praise and kindly remembrance, that dilated the heart and trembled on the lip of every woman who had been in attendance on the Fair. They were a bronzed, scarred, emaciated, halt, blind, deaf, crippled, skeleton corps; some without arms, some without legs, some swinging themselves painfully on crutches, and some leaning on those stronger than themselves for support, all bearing the touching evidence of having suffered for their country. A more elegantly-laid table was never seen. The hall had been redecorated, and flags and handkerchiefs waved, and the band—the best band in the city—welcomed them with "Brave Boys are they."

In the preparations, which had sent

the ladies running hither and thither for the best their resources afforded, my Lady Bountiful had made me her almoner in the distribution of game, and jellies, and ices, for the whole four hundred. I begged of her in a little note, written on a scrap of tissue-paper pressed up against the coffee-urn, to come and see our guests assembled; but she had reasons of her own for declining, and my faith in her ability to judge for herself was sufficient to have silenced any queries which might have arisen in my mind as to the wherefore.

The proceeds of the Fair swelled to over one hundred thousand dollars! And the world wondered! So did the business men of Chicago, who had prognosticated failure, and laughed when the ladies first scattered their circulars and talked of a net profit of ten thousand dollars.

Weary and worn with my arduous labors, I gave myself up to perfect rest for a season. Miss Terrapin advised me to get my winter dresses, for she should be so hurried in December. But I allowed the days to glide away, one after another, without giving the matter any serious attention. The quiet of my little home was so enticing, that I had little or no disposition to go out. Besides, Rush-Street bridge had fallen one day under the weight of a drove of cattle, and I could not get to Lake Street without a disagreeable long *détour* by the way of Clark-Street bridge. The weather was cold, rendering true, literally true, the lines—

"No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,
No comfortable feel, in any member;
No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees;
No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds, No-venber."

I did not need any thing new while I stayed at home, and I never was fond of shopping.

Miss Terrapin said I reminded her of the old man who was found one rainy day curled up in the only dry spot in his house. When asked why he did not mend his roof, he said that "it rained so that he couldn't." "But, why don't you mend it when the sun shines?" "Because it don't need mending then."

I made the application, but did not supply my dress-maker with work. Time enough, I thought, although my garments of soft wool, so important in such a climate, were far from adequate to my necessities.

"It is a good thing to have a journey in prospect once in a while, when one is too lazy to attend to one's wardrobe without a stimulus," I said, one day, laughing.

"You may have a summons to go somewhere yet, before the winter is over," Miss Terrapin replied.

"Perhaps. But, if I should, there is my old black silk always at hand, like frost on a winter morning."

I little dreamed how soon I should be driven to the black silk, though; nor with what benumbed bitterness I should recall the words so lightly spoken!

CHAPTER XIV.

STARTLING NEWS.

"No letter from my sister Spicy this week!" I said to Mrs. Vance, one morning as she sat by my library-fire in her velvet mantle, which revealed little

fine white-lace ruffles at the throat and wrists.

"I hope it don't give you special anxiety," she replied.

"No, hardly. But Spicy is very precise in the fulfilment of her obligations. I fancied she was not well, by the tenor of her last. She is ambitious, and fully determined to stand high in her class, and sometimes I fear she studies harder than is good for her. The tone of her letters has been very different this year from what they were last."

I was interrupted by the postman himself. But the letter was not from Spicy! It was post-marked New York, however. I broke it open and started with alarm! Spicy was ill, quite ill; the physician had requested them to send for me. It might not prove serious, but I had better come immediately.

"Oh, oh!" I exclaimed.

"What is the matter?" asked Mrs. Vance.

I threw the letter into her lap, and started to my feet, wringing my hands.

"Do read it."

"Of course you must go," she said, quietly.

"Oh, my darling! Why did they not telegraph?"

"From the fact of their writing instead of telegraphing, I think you may augur well. I have no doubt they have sent for you as early as seemed best. Don't allow yourself to be needlessly agitated. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing, only come and see Bright sometimes. Or if you will call on your way home, and send Miss Terrapin here, it will save me a journey to Lake Street."

"Certainly. You will take the even-

ing train, I suppose, and I will send my carriage to transport you to the depot."

"Don't give yourself that trouble."

"I shall; and more, I shall go with you to the cars. I wish I might make myself useful in some other way."

I looked into her lovely face—

"And felt how much suffering with years must have
past,
To have perfected there so much sweetness at last."

There was no idle caprice, no mere entanglement of senses between two unemployed natures that was the groundwork of the affection which had sprung up between us, but a subtle harmony, organic, spiritual and intellectual. We were as it were under a spell, and each sympathized in the other's pain. Her words, which always seemed to mean more than words, strengthened me.

I had several hours before me, and I looked after my household and business affairs with a calmness that surprised even myself, considering how I was racked with anxiety. Miss Terrapin came, and promised to spend her nights in my house during my absence. Mrs. Vance's carriage was at my door promptly in time for the train, and she was there herself to cheer and uphold me, and infuse new vigor into my flagging spirits.

It was a journey that seemed of interminable length. The agonizing suspense was more than human nature could bear—so I thought then; but I have learned since, and recently, that its tension is beyond measurement.

I sent a telegram from Buffalo, but the train started before the answer came. With sharpened senses from overwrought

emotions, I ran my eye up and down the brown-stone front while the carriage was coming to a halt in front of Miss Gilbert's school, and read—nothing. Inner life in large cities does not hang out its banners.

"How is Miss Merriman?" I asked, breathlessly, of the servant who opened the door.

"I don't know, ma'am. Walk in the parlor. Who shall I say has called?"

"Let me run up to Miss Merriman's room."

"No, ma'am. I will call Miss Gilbert first. Will you send your name?"

I pulled a card from my *porte-monnaie* petulantly, gave it to the servant and walked rapidly up and down the parlor, while she stopped and read it on the stairs, turned it over, showed it to Katy—the other chamber-maid, whom she met in the second hall—and took time to tell her that "she guessed the lady couldn't be any great shakes, coming so early in the morning and being in such a tearing hurry!"

Miss Gilbert was engaged for a few minutes, so that, taking it all together, I was tortured into a state of mind bordering on frenzy. When she came she apologized for the message having been sent to me in the way it was. One of her teachers had written the letter, and had been expressly directed to ask me if it would be convenient for me to come on immediately, but to assure me at the same time that there was no danger. My telegram sent from Buffalo had induced her to make inquiries, and she regretted exceedingly that I had been needlessly alarmed. Spicy was sick, quite sick, with a low fever, caused, she thought,

by some nervous excitement: but she had no apprehensions of any danger.

I found her looking very sweet, eyes bright and cheeks pink. She threw both arms about my neck, and held me for a minute when I stooped to kiss her.

"How foolish for them to have given you this journey!" she said. "I shall be well in a few days."

"You are glad to see me?"

"What a question! Yes, indeed!"

"Did you think I would come?"

"Oh, yes, I knew it. But it was unnecessary. I have good care. The school-nurse is with me nearly every moment. Miss Gilbert comes very often, and the girls stand ready to do any thing and every thing. I am not very sick, as you will soon discover."

I was not satisfied in regard to that until I had held a consultation with the old physician.

"I am puzzled with her case," he said. "There seems to be nothing out of order in her body, and she denies any trouble on her mind. Perhaps you will be able to give me the diagnosis of her disease, after a few days' companionship."

She was certainly weak, for she slept all the evening while I sat looking in her face, but took her broth with a great relish at ten o'clock. She left a little in the bottom of the cup, and asked me to save it for her, as she might want it in the middle of the night.

"Cover it up with this," she said, producing something from under her pillow, and I laughed loud enough to have waked the seven sleepers in the next room, as I took in my hand the old likeness of Fred Gildersleeve.

"What has become of your two-dollar man?" I asked, after my mirth had subsided.

"Don't speak of him! O Meddie!"

"Why? What now?"

"I am so angry with myself."

"What have you been doing?"

"Nothing!—and that is just what's the matter."

"Do explain!"

"I don't feel like it; besides, the doctor says I must rest quietly at night."

"Very well. I am here to see that the doctor's orders are obeyed, so we will have our talk to-morrow."

She closed her eyes and lay perfectly still for a few moments. Suddenly she became restless, and asked for a drink of water. Then she turned her matted back-hair toward me, and her fingers were busy picking at the blankets. Something evidently troubled her. But what?

"Meddie, are you going to sit up all night?"

The voice seemed miles away, and the classic little head did not turn.

"No; I shall lie down after a while. I want to see you asleep first."

Silence again, and her watch on the table ticked out twenty-five minutes.

"Meddie, shall you be going down-street for any thing within a day or two?"

"Why, darling?"

"I want you to do a favor for me."

"What is it?"

"Please go to my writing-desk, and in the corner, this way, you will find something folded in a white paper marked '*Sacred*.' There!—yes, that is it."

I took it to her.

"You keep it, Meddie; I don't want to see it. When you are out, just stop at the missionary-office, and donate it to the heathen."

I opened the little parcel and there was a two-dollar bill!

"A new method of investment," I remarked, with a smile which she did not see.

"Don't tantalize me. You would not, if you knew all. I suppose I sha'n't have any peace of mind until I tell you. It has got to come, and I may as well relieve myself first as last. But I do feel as if I should like to hide under a cabbage-leaf for the rest of my natural life! Listen, Meddie! I have seen Mr. Hiddlededahlgreen and talked with him for several minutes, and had that money in my pocket, and never once thought to offer it to him!"

"How did it happen?"

"We were at the Academy of Design, under the charge of Miss Pluss, our drawing-teacher, who never knows whether she is in the body or out when she gets in front of a good painting, and that accounts for my having an uninterrupted *tête-à-tête* with a gentleman. I was examining a marble bust which interested no one else, and I was left quite alone, when all at once he was standing by me, and took my hand just as he did that time in the restaurant, and said he was very glad of the opportunity of saying 'good-by' to me, for he was going to Europe to be gone several years; that he had thought seriously of calling, but was aware of Miss Gilbert's strict rules, and presumed he should not be allowed to see me if he did; asked

me when I was going to graduate, even to the date of our commencement-exercises, and if I expected to return to Chicago immediately after, and ever so much more. And all that time he was holding my hand, and pretty near squeezing it, to remind me of my little obligation, no doubt, and it never once came into my stupid head. He's gone, and my last chance is gone of ever paying the debt, so I want to get rid of the two dollars."

I laughed, but yet I caressed and comforted her, and promised to bury the dreadful bank-note in the Potter's Field of benevolence, and begged her to think how much good it was going to do some poor Feejee, and when she tried to speak I put my hand over her mouth and was rewarded at last by the soft, even breathing that was an assurance of welcome sleep.

She was better the next day. I took the first opportunity of carrying out her wishes, and she thanked me with an earnestness that the occasion hardly warranted. Her complexion was of that soft, pale tint with a slight undertone of brown in it, which kindles into brilliancy under excitement, and her soul all seemed on the surface when she exclaimed:

"I am so much obliged to you, Meddie!"

She improved rapidly, and was soon able to sit up for an hour at a time. The holiday vacation had commenced, and Miss Gilbert insisted upon our occupying a more cheerful room on the second floor. Spicy was pensive and drooped. I told her stories and read to her, and used every means to give tone and direction to her sick mind. Sometimes, even after she was able to walk about

the room, I was haunted with the apprehension that she was going to die. Her manner toward me was ineffably tender, almost pathetic, and I often found her in tears. Yet her appetite had returned, and her general health seemed restored.

She agreed with us all that I must get to my home in Chicago before New-Year's Day, and was so self-contained at the last, that I was almost piqued to have her show so little feeling.

"The idea of travelling at this season of the year in a black silk!" she said. "You will certainly freeze without an extra shawl! Do take mine!"

I declined her offer, for I thought I should get along very well with my furs and water-proof, as the cars were usually warm.

The first part of my journey was devoid of incident. I passed over the Great Western Railway, arriving in Detroit on Thursday morning, the last day of 1863. It was snowing slightly as we left the depot, and the storm continued through the day. We were behind time at Marshall; I think it was three o'clock when we got there, or when we left there, I don't remember which, for my hands were too numb to get at my watch, and I depended upon what I heard people saying around me. It was six o'clock when we stopped at Niles, and some gentlemen remarked that the storm was increasing in violence and the snow in volume very fast. Some one said it was doubtful whether we reached Chicago before midnight. I noticed that we were a long time in starting, as if the engine moved with difficulty. At the next station, and the next, the same trouble was apparent. The wind was

fast becoming a gale. It whistled and shrieked around the windows, and people gathered near the fire in the centre of the car. We were near New Buffalo, when a shrill whistle signalled, "Down with the brakes!" and the train stopped. Passengers rushed out, and came back to tell the rest that the ominous and imperative red-light was in the path! Later, they discovered that it was a freight-train blocked in by the snow, and we could neither move backward nor forward. A message was sent on to the next station for an engine, and in the course of two hours we were in motion once more. But our progress was painfully slow. I heard the passengers wishing each other "A happy New-Year," and soon we were immovable and some one announced that engines had been dispatched to Chicago for help.

"Where are we?" I ventured to ask of my next neighbor.

"Close by the crossing of the Michigan Southern Railroad," replied the proprietor of one of the finest, longest, silkiest white beards I ever saw, and who sat on the opposite side of the aisle.

It was getting very cold. I sighed audibly, in remembrance of wasted opportunities and woollen goods. I had not been so thinly clad in winter-time for years. What a godsend that shawl of Spicy's would have been!

The wood provided for our stove was wet or green, or both, and everybody was in a shiver. The wind howled across the low prairie, and penetrated every crack and crevice, and little snow-drifts piled in about the windows, and swept across our necks and shoulders. The shiver soon became pain in feet and

arms and hands, and the fuel was fast disappearing.

"What shall we do?" more than one voice asked with a shudder.

"The fences!" A happy suggestion, and active men secured a saw, took turns in its use, and fed the hungry stove. Soon the flames roared up the pipe, and smoke was discovered about the roof of the car. That would never do! Rather suffer the cold with shelter, than be turned carless into that raging storm on the bleak prairie!

"Be careful! be careful!" shouted the conductor. "If one car gets on fire, I cannot save the train!"

One car was on fire! And speechless with terror we watched the herculean efforts of brave men to extinguish it, which they did; but it was no longer tonable, and its living freight was scattered through the other cars. I gave up my seat to a gentleman who was bringing a lady in, in his arms, and took one farther forward.

The cold grew colder. The winds howled louder. The frost pierced to the quick like sharp needles. Those who had lunch-baskets that were not empty, distributed their remaining contents among the invalids and children. The gentlemen alternated between the baggage-car and the fire, and between the fence and the baggage-car, and the several fires. What had become of the engine sent for aid? Chicago was before our very eyes, and must we perish? The sun was up, shedding no warmth, not even showing his face, or giving us a ray of hope or comfort. An army of fiends must have been let loose in the atmosphere!

It was about noon when a Michigan

Southern train, drawn by three engines, appeared in sight. It was immediately signalled, stopped, and arrangements made for the transfer of the chilled passengers from our train to it. The snow was deep, huge drifts banked in every direction, and we must traverse it a distance of three hundred yards, in the face of a snow-tempest and frost-laden wind, which was sweeping over us like a storm of grape! But we could be taken to the city, if we could immediately reach the Southern train. Not a moment for delay, or the engines might freeze immovable. Cold as it was in our car, those who had not had occasion to expose themselves to the storm previously knew little of the ordeal through which they must pass to reach the other train.

"Don't a man of you start without taking a woman or child under your care!" shouted a full, rich, deep voice; and, turning quickly, I saw the gentleman for whom I had resigned my seat in the night, swinging his hat with a gesture of command.

In an instant he had picked up his own charge, thrown the corner of her cloak over her face, and plunged into the fearful storm. Men, women, and children followed his example. Strong men fell by the way, frail women wallowed and struggled, and were dragged to the cars insensible, and children were rescued half-frozen. I waited a little, partly to see how others succeeded, but more from shrinking dread of the perilous undertaking; and then the other terror, lest I should be left behind and alone, took possession of me and forced me to exertion. I leaped into the snow, and right by my side leaped the man with

the white beard, and tried to help me. He had been buttoning up his coat and tying up his ears and face, while I had been summoning my courage. But my blood was the younger of the two. I got in advance of him; the snow blinded me—I tried to go sidewise, and backward—I fell down, plunging my arms into the snow to my shoulders—rose again—advanced a little—stumbled—lost my muff and my veil—and at last yielded to my fate with one long, hopeless look at the welcome haven so near and yet so far from me.

I was half-buried in the snow when I was grasped by strong hands and swiftly borne to the car. I heard the melodious voice, which had rung in my ears once before, say to the lady who received me from his arms, and commenced chafing my face with snow:

"Excuse me, that old gentleman has fallen, and I must try and help him."

Children were crying, women were moaning, and men were rushing out for snow with which to extract frost from feet and hands, forgetting their own frozen faces until made conscious of it by the painful tingling which follows neglect. White noses, ears, faces, and hands, marked nearly every one of the Central passengers, and many of the Southern who had nobly aided in the transfer. The ladies on the latter train received the helpless and injured, and converted the cars into a temporary hospital. Mothers were fainting and asking for their children, and strong men hardly were able to suppress cries of physical agony.

And the engine shrieked, and then, as if madly, moved on. Hope of early relief inspired us all with fortitude.

Three miles more, and the train suddenly stopped. Two Rock Island engines were frozen up on the track.

"Well, Dr. Gildersleeve, what is the prospect?" asked a voice near me, as a rush of cold air and a bang of the car-door proclaimed that some one was coming in.

"The engineer says that seventy-five engines could not draw us to town!" was the reply.

I could not turn my head, for my face was packed with snow, and some one was chafing my hands and arms. But he came along in front of me. I knew I could not be mistaken. It was the gentleman to whom I owed my life.

"Ah, Mrs. Belmore! I thought I recognized you, but was not certain," he said. "I dined at your table several times during the Fair."

I did remember! It all came to me! I had been attracted by his fine face and courtly bearing, and had asked his name, but none of the ladies knew. They thought he was an editor, or at least a man of some literary distinction, by the deference that was shown him by such gentlemen as Mayor Montrose and Rev. Dr. Montague, who met him there.

So his name was Gildersleeve!—not Fred—too many years and too much dignity resting on his shoulders. But Ida Everett's quondam lover, perchance! And a noble specimen of God's handiwork he was indeed! The very car seemed full of him, he emanated so much hope and cheer and good-nature.

"We must shake our lunch-baskets once more, and make the best of our scanty bill-of-fare," he said, in reply to the pitiful query of a feeble old woman,

as to whether we should be able to get any thing to eat before morning.

A sharp pain in my stomach reminded me that I had not tasted a morsel for more than twenty-four hours. Must we die of starvation and cold, in full view of the turrets and spires of luxurious Chicago! Was there no one among us who could face the storm and bring aid?

I saw the question answered a few moments later. More than ten stalwart men, wrapped to their eyes, undertook to reach a house that seemed not over three-fourths of a mile distant, and each turned back to save himself. It could not be done!

Children screamed with pain and hunger. Women were exhausted with fasting, fright, and frost. Men were discussing the probable failure of fuel, and the cautious of both sexes were constantly warning the fire-tenders with pictures of burning-cars and quick destruction.

"There is wood and coal on yonder Rock Island engines. We must get it or freeze," said Dr. Gildersleeve, and gentlemen unused to exposure, who had never handled an axe, or carried a burden, followed him into the storm and worked like heroes. But they could not exercise in the terribly exhaustive wind but a few minutes at a time, and volunteers were reënlisted again and again, before the needed supply for the night was secured.

He was shaking the snow from his hair, and pressing his hands to his whitened ears, when the friend who had addressed him before asked for his wife.

"She is comfortable—more so than most of the ladies. We were better provided for cold than travellers usually are.

as our experience last year in getting snowed in on a Western train was a severe stricture on improvidence."

I roused myself enough to make kindly inquiries, and learned that his wife was a confirmed invalid. He was just bringing her home from an Eastern cure, where she had been for several months. And, although I did not see her, I learned that she was warmly tucked in an improvised bed in the next car, and that her name was—HELEN!



CHAPTER XV.

THE RESCUE.

MEANWHILE the conductor of the train and two loyal friends had breasted the tempest, determined to save the passengers or die in the attempt. It was not quite dark when they reached the Tremont, so frozen that they could scarcely be recognized by their nearest kin. The news which they communicated flew like wildfire from one hotel to another. The cooked meats that were being carved for their dinners were hastily packed, as also chickens and game, and sandwiched tongue, and turkey, and jellies, and wines; and four large sleighs were filled and manned; but one only of the three who had brought the sad intelligence of perishing humanity, was able to return as a guide to the ill-fated train. The other two were crippled for years.

And but one only of the four sleighs reached its destination. The drivers of the others lost their way, were blinded by the storm, and finally returned

whence they came with frozen feet and hands and faces.

What a thrilling announcement! The door of our car opened, and a muffled figure as white as the storm he seemed to represent, entered and hoarsely shouted:

"Provisions for the multitude! A sleighful from the city!"

Surprise, gratitude, and admiration, echoed from the heart of every one who had realized our danger. We ate, and wondered, and silently thanked the men who had dared so much for our salvation.

Fires were lighted at the rear of the cars as a beacon to the other sleighs, but they came not. How any human being could have lived to ride in the face of such a storm was a matter of astonishment to all.

The sleigh which had arrived, out of mercy to the horses, set out for Chicago as quickly as unladen, and one or two ladies, who would not be persuaded to the contrary, went in it. But we learned afterward that they were badly frozen before reaching a place of shelter.

The night wore away. There were but few eyes closed in sleep. The fires were carefully fed and watched. The winds subsided toward morning, and the full moon peered in upon us to say: "The storm is spent, and how have you borne its wrath?"

There was joy among us, when, about eight o'clock, an engine was seen approaching from the east with a snow-plough. Before ten o'clock it had reached us and drawn us back to the junction, where two or three other trains were in waiting. It was somewhat after noon when sleighs arrived,

chartered by the railroad company, to convey such passengers as did not choose to wait for the road to be broken to Ulrich's Hotel. It was a tedious, cold ride, but we were safely set down there, and partook of an excellent meal, for which the warm-hearted proprietor refused to accept any recompense.

Dr. Gildersleeve was one of several who stayed by the train.

"My wife will suffer more by the exposure of a sleigh-ride than by remaining quietly where she is," he said, as he pinned a heavy blanket around me, which had been sent in one of the sleighs. And he was indefatigable in his efforts to make every one comfortable—running from sleigh to sleigh, warming boards for the feet, and bits of wood for the hands, tucking in robes, and pinning down veils—and then the bells jingled and we saw his pleasant face no more.

I tried to recall what I had heard him say about the number of his residence, but could not. It was not far, however, from my own home. I thought of it many times, while I lay sick and suffering from the effects of my terrible experiences, for I did not leave my bed again before the following March. I had taken a cold, which alarmed both friends and physicians. My voice was entirely gone for three weeks, and medical inhalations were the last resort. I saw no one but Mrs. Vance. She was my daily attendant, and to her judicious ministrations I owed my final restoration to health.

I never mentioned Dr. Gildersleeve's name to her. What right had I to know the secrets of their youth? And she had

never, by word or look, given me the fragment of a license to touch upon her past life. There was the one barrier between us that I dared not pass. He called twice to inquire after me during my illness. She was sitting by my bed one day when his card was brought in, and his courteous message delivered. But her features did not change, and she dropped me some medicine the next moment without a perceptible quiver of a muscle.

Spicy's letters were read to me each week, and it was interesting to note her transformation into the character of counsellor and comforter, as soon as she heard of my illness. I should have been blind indeed not to have seen her steady, constant growth. She was beyond me already in many things. With all her childish ways and native simplicity, the angles of her character were getting pretty well rounded. Miss Gilbert wrote me one or two very encouraging letters in regard to her progress, but my love was far-seeing and could detect unnumbered evidences which the skill of experts might fail to discover.

Wherefore all this outcry about the inferiority of the provisions for female education, in comparison with those for men? The public-school systems of every State in the Union unquestionably advance both sexes alike. And where are any better institutions for young women than Miss Lyon's, Miss Gilbert's, and a score of other schools which I might name, where our daughters and sisters are instructed in every branch of knowledge, and every fine art for which they have any aptitude, besides partaking of the benefits which are to be derived

from the society of the best teachers money can procure? They live among tasteful appointments, they feast upon wholesome food, as well as concerts, lectures, and social reunions, and every refining influence which Christian love and thoughtful care can suggest is brought to bear upon them. There are thousands of women who have never improved under their advantages, as there always have been and will be thousands of men who believe in cheap, rough schools for their boys, forgetting how much culture can serve them hereafter.

As soon as I was able to ride, Mrs. Vance was untiring in her endeavors to give me all the fresh air I could breathe. Sometimes she accompanied me, but oftener her carriage came entirely at my disposal. Her venerable aunt Mary was quite ill, and she was divided in her cares. But I was gaining strength every day, and needed her less. Leonardus was looking forward to the termination of the war in a few months, and was giving me a new lease of life in each letter, in the shape of his probable and permanent return. He never knew all I had suffered.

June came, with its roses and sunshine, and I was once more on my way to New York. It was one of Dr. Wilder's prescriptions, and then I could not well forego the pleasure of attending Miss Gilbert's commencement.

I stayed at the hotel in company with my friends from Philadelphia, who met me there, for a few days previous to the examinations, knowing how much better off Spicy would be without my sisterly interruption at such a time. My health

was improving rapidly. New-York air was just the thing for me. Spicy declared it as her belief that "New-York stores, and plenty of money, was a much more effectual remedy for diseases in general."

How splendidly she acquitted herself when the great day at last arrived! She took a prize in scholarship. I knew she would; and I was elated, or inflated, until I feared my new patent button-holes on my dress might give way. They were made by machine, and I never had any faith in the invention.

The "essays" were to be read in the evening at the grand reception, and the diplomas awarded afterward. The young ladies of the graduating class were seated in a circle in the centre of the parlors, and looked like so many rare and beautiful flowers.

Just as I entered, a tall, high-foreheaded, black-bearded young professor—not of elocution—commenced reading the sprightly, analytical, satirical articles which the young ladies had been studying upon half the year, in a most intolerably humdrum and prosy manner. I was in an agony, and begged of one of the teachers near me to tell me why each young lady did not read her own.

"Miss Gilbert thinks it would not be proper. It would give the young ladies too much publicity."

"Publicity, indeed! How much more publicity, I pray, than to produce the happy effusions which are being so ruthlessly murdered!"

"Young ladies never read their own compositions in fashionable schools, Mrs. Belmore!"

"Fools, then, are in fashion!"

She stared at me, and I apologized immediately.

"Of course you are not responsible for the regulation, but it is one of the most painful entertainments it was ever my lot to witness. Here we are, not five feet from the assassin, and cannot fasten the sense of any two passages together! He rattles it off as one would shell corn! If a man must be selected to torture every guest assembled, why not have found one with soul enough to appreciate the misery he was giving! My poor, dear Spicy! Her valedictory address, so full of good points, and which would be so touching and effective in her own hands, must it meet the same fate? Yes, there it comes!—how aggravating, how absurd! The dolt! He does not know an interrogation-point from a pair of bars!—nor a dash from a high board-fence! Hear him bidding his classmates farewell! They raise curious mustaches in this young ladies' school if his is a sample! Now he has raised the mill-gate, and is inundating the teachers! Ah, the model school has not yet been achieved!"

I came to silence through my desire to listen to the few remarks which accompanied the presentation of the diplomas. The young ladies all stood. I wondered why they did not have veils thrown over them to prevent their being seen! Too much publicity, indeed! Why this crowd? If it is to become a source of harm instead of good, dispense with guests! But they are the friends of the young ladies, and are interested in their successes, you say? Precisely so. That was my first supposition. Hence my dismay when I found they were only to

be heard through a male translator, and one who did not know the elements of his own language!

I had hardly been so out of humor since my own school-days. My brow was clouded, and when Spicy came to greet me I forgot to commend. She was happy and unconscious, however, for did she not hold in her hand the scroll tied with blue ribbon?

"Now, Meddie, I must introduce you to all my friends," she said, with great animation.

The nearest one was Miss Hale. Miss Hale was bright and sparkling, wore a garnet-dress and diamonds, and talked bad English. I discussed the weather and the numbers present with her, and was relieved by an introduction to Miss Twissapple. Miss Twissapple was a Bostonian, had been at Miss Gilbert's one year, and was homesick; indeed, she said she did not think it right for any one to come from Boston to New York without being homesick! And then her lovely home was such a contrast to a boarding-school! Suddenly I was carried away to Miss Proudhead. Miss Proudhead was gotten up in tarlatan, with a great quantity of sash-ribbon and extra flutings. She was in love with New York—that old miracle, love at first sight. She wanted to stay here always. She introduced me to Mr. Simpson. Mr. Simpson was a theological student, very fresh, from some Western college, and very much distressed with the vanities of this world. He wanted to know if I had seen his friend, Dr. Steelpen. I had not. He was surprised, said he was the editor of the *Roaring Lion*, one of the leading evening papers, thought every-

body knew him, and went at once and found him, and brought him to me with a great profusion of bows. Dr. Steelpen looked like the other young men present, whom I supposed were only private citizens, wore cuir-colored gloves and a green necktie; asked me if I was any connection of General Belmore of the army; was very deferential the moment he learned that I was that gentleman's wife. Had a daughter in the school? No, that could not be possible! Some relative? A sister!—how very pleasant! Her name? Oh, yes; he had seen Miss Merriman. A few more questions were very adroitly put, and then Spicy broke up the little *tête-à-tête* by presenting Miss Rubicond, her pretty class-mate. Miss Rubicond took my heart at once. Her face was beaming with life and intelligence, and I forgot to notice what she wore. There is such a difference in faces.

My eyes followed Spicy, as she moved airily and gracefully about among the guests, with fond admiration. She had grown very beautiful within the last year, and she was transcendently charming on this occasion. I did not so much blame Dr. Steelpen for causing an elaborately-written article to appear in the next issue of the *Roaring Lion*, calling her the belle of the evening; but I was indignant with Miss Gilbert for allowing a newspaper editor at her receptions, and tolerating the senseless gossip in the public prints as to how each young lady was dressed! Too much publicity for one of them to read her own essay, but quite the fashion to read the next day, as I did:

"Miss Spicy Merriman, of Chicago,

a sister-in-law of General Belmore, was the most bewildering beauty present, and the most elegantly dressed in point-lace over white satin," etc.

The dear child never thought of wearing any thing more expensive than tarlatan, and she never had a scrap of point-lace in her life! Dr. Steelpen said nothing, either, of its having been a school-reception! I cried with vexation, when I saw the ill-bred paragraph.

But I anticipate. Miss Rubicond was giving me a lively description of how she had had her pocket picked the day before, when I saw Spicy's face blanch, then light up with a thousand pretty scintillations, as she advanced to greet a gentleman who was pushing toward her through the crowd. I could not see his face distinctly without being rude to Miss Rubicond; but, after a while, I wondered who had secured my sister's attention for so long, when it was a rule of the establishment that no young lady should talk more than ten successive minutes with one guest! I turned, finally, to look, and at the same instant Spicy moved toward me, and introduced her companion:

"I beg pardon," she said, addressing him as the ceremony was about half completed; "but I never could pronounce your name!"

"Gildersleeve," he replied, bowing.

"Mrs. Belmore, Mr. Gildersleeve," Spicy went on with the utmost gravity; but, dropping her hand on my arm in a perfectly natural manner, she pinched me until I started with pain.

I found him handsome and agreeable. He may have been a trifle eccentric, for he coined new and odd words regardless

of the rules of etymology; but he was the more interesting for being original, and "was a gentleman of infinite jest and most excellent fancy." He had been abroad, had spanned the Mediterranean, had visited the land of the Pharaohs, and the temples of the East; had seen much, and forgotten nothing.

"Have you a brother in Chicago?" I asked, after a little.

"Yes, the Rev. Dr. Gildersleeve. I am going to see him in a few days. He thinks to persuade me to cast my burden in the West."

"He has not always resided there?"

"Oh, no. He worked at the trade of saving souls in the little town of Peculiarville, on the Hudson, for a few years. He first went to Chicago in 1860. He is one of your muscular Christians, broad-shouldered and strong-armed, and wages remorseless war upon the inactivity of the multitude. He is striving now for a revolution in journalism, and performs so much labor daily, with constantly-increasing physical and intellectual vigor, that he is supposed to have been the original promulgator of the doctrine that deterioration of bodily or mental powers under sixty is an unnatural decline."

Before I could reply, Miss Gilbert had ushered into my presence a stiff-necked gentlemen with a bald head, and some one had spirited away Mr. Gildersleeve.

Shortly after, a few sets had been formed for dancing in the crowded parlors, and I saw him taking his place with Spicy. I could observe him better at a distance, and admitted to myself that I had never seen a more elegant figure or a finer bearing. Spicy's face was like a

mine of brilliants, and when he paused every now and then to drink in the incense of her first girlish beauty, a pang of jealousy seized me and my spirit was all in arms against him. If I had known, what I afterward knew, how skilfully his well-timed arrival had been planned, and with what persistence he had secured his introduction to Miss Gilbert in order to be invited to her reception, I should hardly have shaken hands with him as courteously as I did when he made his adieux, or have extended the invitation, which fell naturally from my lips, for him to call upon us in Chicago.

"Would you ever have believed that old picture which I have housed so long was taken for him?" said Spicy, as she stood with her arms round me in the dressing-room. "I shall hide it now, for I feel as if I had been guilty of profanity."

What could I say to her? Had her heart read its destiny? I don't know why I should have arrived at any such foregone conclusion. But I had been driven there by inexorable intuitions. I asked myself many questions; and principally, were Spicy's eyes becoming open to that highest, holiest attribute of our nature, love? Had she tasted the first sweet consciousness of its existence, felt the first flutterings of its silken wings, and heard the first rising sound of that wind which sweeps over us all to purify or to destroy?

My thoughts were like a cloud-landscape, which may be comprehended but not explained. And why need we always explain? Some feelings are so untranslatable that no language has yet been found for them. They gleam upon

us through the twilight of fancy, and yet when we bring them close, and hold them up to the light of reason, they lose their importance all at once—like glow-worms which gleam with such a spiritual light in the evening, but, when subjected to the inevitable gas, prove to be only worms like so many others.

During our short visit to the seashore, and a few days in Boston and Albany, and a rather eventful and long-drawn-out journey homeward, neither Spicy nor myself once mentioned Mr. Gildersleeve's name.

Spicy grew more lovely each day. Happiness shone from every lineament of her face, and admiring eyes followed her every movement. Her exhaustless fund of gayety and vivacity won all hearts, and rendered her a most agreeable companion. I shall always want to remember her as she was then; the most gentle and true, the most gifted and modest, the most piquant and pleasing of only sisters. Fatherless and motherless and brotherless, we clung to each other, the two representatives of a large family who had long since gone to that home from which there is no return. Clung to each other did I say? That is, I clung to Spicy, as a mother clings to her child, and had been fondly looking forward to this era in her history, when we two could sit down and enjoy. And Spicy had always regarded me as her dearest and best friend. What did I fear? Why guard her with such green-eyed tenacity?

I had refitted and refurnished a room for her, which she declared was a perfect gem. Her own things were soon arranged in it, and a few brackets and ornaments and pictures added afterward,

gave life and effect to what I had previously placed at her disposal. But the old daguerreotype was seen no more, nor did I ever again hear any humorous allusions to it.

About three weeks after we returned, a neatly-executed card was sent up one evening "to the ladies." Spicy handed it to me, and I read "F. R. Gildersleeve." The exquisite blush which mantled Spicy's cheeks confirmed all my former theories. Oh! how should I snatch my jewel from its setting?

Bright was fretful that evening. He had cut his finger with a string and would insist upon my nursing and caressing it. I tried my best to quiet and leave him, but he was obstinate and detained me a prisoner in my room.

Spicy came in radiant about ten o'clock. She said Mr. Gildersleeve regretted very much not having seen me, but would call the next day at three in the afternoon to pay his respects to me, if I would be so kind as to admit him.

"Serene, full-orbed, divinely-imperinent chief of scoundrels!" I exclaimed, with fire flashing from every pore. "Indeed, I will not have any such kindness! It would be superhuman power of acting, and I am no hypocrite, whatever my faults!"

"What do you mean?" asked Spicy, with a look of unspeakable sadness, a sadness which was a sadness dear to the soul, and a great deal of down there in her voice.

"That I decline any further conversation on the subject."

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. BELMORE AND FRED GILDERSLEEVE.

MY resolution was taken. I had changed my mind since I dealt the cruel blow which had sent Spicy to her room like a wounded bird. Yes, I would see Mr. Gildersleeve when he should call, but I would not let this thing go on. No possible pain to Spicy weighed for a moment in the balance against my impulse to part them. It was sheer selfishness, but it was human. I might have remembered the lines which I once heard Nursy Brown singing to Bright:

"Nature's laws must be obeyed;
And this is one most strictly laid
On every soul which she has made,
Down from our earliest mother:

"Be *self* your first and greatest care,
From all reproach the darling spare,
And every blame which she should bear
Put off upon another.

"Had Nature taken a second thought
A better precept she had taught,
And good instead of evil wrought
By those the power possessing—

"For *self* had been put out of sight,
The love of others brought to light—
In short, the wrong had all been right
And man to man a blessing."

I heard the bell echo through the house, and in a few minutes my expected visitor was announced. I descended to the parlor armed to the teeth with the weapons of my disordered inclinations. I had not mistaken his errand. He was there to ask permission to pay his addresses to my sister. It was very gentlemanly done. But cost what it might I was bound to refuse his request. And I did. He did not ask me to give any reasons. He did not seem to presume that I had any worth giving. He evidently regarded me as capricious and unstable.

I was nettled by his aggravating coolness. At last he said, and I had that same painful consciousness of being talked down to, that had first come over me in connection with Spicy's aggrieved face the night before:

"I have not spoken to Miss Merriman on this subject, preferring most decidedly your approval before doing so, but in my opinion we are both too deeply in love for any particular good to come from interposition. It has been brought about by one of those inexplicable agencies for which we do not pretend to hold ourselves responsible. In my case, for instance, I have wandered through a pretty fair number of years, have paid my dividend of homage to the goddesses of beauty in one place and another, without ever having had my heart seriously touched until chance threw me in the way of your irresistible sister. Since then, I have very naturally decided that the heart cannot remain empty healthfully, neither must it feed upon itself. I esteemed it less than manly to reveal my love and try to win that of an unfledged birdling, so I tore myself away and went to Europe. The merest accident on the day before my departure threw us together for a brief moment, and without the knowledge of it on her part, or any intention of drawing it from her on mine, the certainty that she loved me became my secret, and has since given me the most ecstatic delight."

He took out his watch mechanically and glanced at the time, then rose, like one perfectly conscious of his advantages, personal and intellectual, and filled with a noble charity for what in his lordly way he no doubt esteemed my unavoid-

able acquiescence at some future period, and bade me good-afternoon.

I remained sitting like one in a dream. Spicy came in and sat down at the piano, but she only tumbled over her music, she did not strike a chord. I could not speak. I could not even look at her. Two scalding tears were forcing their way down my cheeks, and I covered my face.

It was with an effort that I could discharge my home and social duties respectably for the next two weeks. Spicy drifted about as blithe as ever, except that her sallies of humor were less frequent, and her cheeks were a trifle blanched. She had asked no question relative to my interview with her lover, a circumstance in itself perplexing, but in keeping with her singularly unreadable character. She had always been the surprise as well as the life of my life. If I had seen the pencilling on a card which was attached to an exquisite little locket containing a miniature, and worn next her heart, the veil which so obscured my vision would have been rent indeed. I was so unhappy that I applied to Mrs. Vance for counsel. I did not, however, reveal to her the gentleman's name, although she must have learned it shortly afterward.

"And you think they thoroughly suit each other?" she asked, after listening to my self-reproaches.

"It so appears from my point of observation."

"And you have no objection to the lover himself, his family, or his fortunes?"

"None whatever, as far as I am aware."



"I was nettled by his aggravating coolness."



"Then you ought to remember that right is right, just as wrong is wrong, and that true love is too rare a plant to be lightly crushed. Where would you have been but for its haven?"

I trembled, and the vague apprehension, bitterer by far than the torments of jealousy or the humiliation of wounded self-love, stood out in my mind like a veritable accuser, of my having sat in judgment and failed in justice.

"Why does not Spicy complain, or plead with me, and give me a chance to retract my folly?" I asked.

"Simply because it is unlike her to do any such thing," replied Mrs. Vance.

"But why does not the devoted lover appear once more and sue on bended knee for her hand? That is the way these difficulties are overleaped in books."

"I dare say he is not that type of a man."

"What shall I do?"

Mrs. Vance smiled at the despairing tone of my question. "If you have made up your mind that you cannot, will not, stand in the way of your sister's happiness, you have only to communicate that same fact to the gentleman in question, as I understand the case."

Thus I reasoned, myself, after her words reached my ears, and I welcomed the relief which my decision brought to both mind and body. But I did not know where to find Mr. Gildersleeve. I made sundry and divers private investigations all in vain. As the last resort I resolved to call on the Rev. Dr. Gildersleeve and his wife. The matter of calling on them had been on my mind ever since my recovery in the spring. It had

seemed rather an obligation than otherwise, after all that had occurred on that frozen railroad-train, and his courtesy afterward. I knew where they lived. It was in a pretentious-looking house, not five blocks away, and in a fashionable quarter of the city. I had noted it when I passed that way. A visit now would probably lead me into the knowledge of the whereabouts of the brother, and without any direct questionings either.

I dressed with more than my usual care one afternoon. Spicy commented upon the fact, and asked me if I was going to make calls. I replied in the negative, pinning my veracity to the singular number, and felt very much chagrined that I should be obliged to steal away like one setting out on a questionable expedition. Then she proposed taking a walk with me, and I declined her company, quite an unusual circumstance for one who was in the habit of publishing every why and wherefore of her movements to all concerned. I asked Spicy to remain at home and receive Mrs. Vance, who was coming to drive us out to Lake View. She looked surprised, but I hurried away before some new embarrassment should intervene. I rang the bell at Dr. Gildersleeve's door, and the servant appeared. It was a colored girl.

"Massa not in and Missus no see company."

I had nothing to do but leave my card and return home. We had not had rain for some time, and the streets on the north side, where there were no pavements, were filled with deep sand. In crossing one I sprang to get out of the way of a carriage, stepped on my dress,

and was pitched into the dust. I was not hurt, but inclined to glance my eye up and down the side-walk to see if I had been seen, and behold! a gentleman was running toward me. I turned my face the other way, and commenced shaking the dirt from my bottle-green silk, but in an instant he had stooped gracefully by my side, restored my card-case, and begged to hope that I had not injured myself. It was Fred Gildersleeve.

The next moment Mrs. Vance's carriage had halted, and, with a musical laugh, she asked me to ride, since I could not be trusted to walk. Mr. Gildersleeve handed me in, and I had the remarkable presence of mind to thank him, although I was too much disturbed and shaken up to be able to add what else was on my lips, and the opportunity was lost.

Spicy declined driving with us that afternoon. The horses were in fine condition, and we were back in time to drive to Lake Street to do some shopping. Mrs. Vance tried to persuade me to dine with her, and, not succeeding, bade me adieu at her own door, and sent the carriage home with me.

The new Rush-Street bridge had swung just before we arrived, and we were consequently foremost in the long line of vehicles which were waiting to cross. A tug tugging at two large vessels came screeching and yelling along toward the lake, and the horses stood on their hind-feet in an attitude of mortal terror. One leap forward and we should be plunged into the dark, dirty pool known as Chicago River. One leap to the right, and we should be entangled in a butcher's cart. One leap to the left, and a heterogeneous mass of human be-

ings huddled together, ready to spring upon the bridge, would be crushed. Every looker-on saw our imminent peril, and the imperative need of some strong hand to seize the heads of the frightened animals if a catastrophe would be prevented. Only one, however, in all that crowd, had the quickness and the courage to dart to the rescue. It was Fred Gildersleeve. He held them firmly, and infused so much power and protection into his voice, that the excited creatures were subdued, and, quivering and snorting and pawing the earth, made no attempt to break away from him. As the bridge closed he stepped one side to relieve their curbed impatience, and I, beckoning him to me, invited him to step into the carriage, and drive home and dine with us.

"It would give me great pleasure, Mrs. Belmore, but I am afraid of your horses," he replied, with a smile that had just enough of sarcasm in it to sting.

I felt that I was having as hard a time to undo what I had done, as Spicy did in trying to pay her two-dollar debt.

The next evening, however, the bell rang, and Mr. Gildersleeve's card was brought to me. I went to the parlor directly and met him with undisguised cordiality.

"And so I take it that you regard me no longer as a monster or a robber. But I do not accept this token of your favor as a reward for my services," he said, with that same high-up bearing which had so nearly annihilated me on a former occasion. "I love your sister, and, since your manner has indicated the kind permission, I have called to see her."

I entered into a somewhat ambiguous explanation, and concluded by sending Spicy to the parlor, and then, under the dim gas-light in my own room, rocked Bright in my arms, and cried until my eyes were inflamed for a week.

"My pet will owe her happiness to me," was my only solace, and I repeated the paragraph over and over again, in the same way as when a child I once declared, "I'm not afraid of the dark! I am not afraid of the dark! I'm not afraid of the dark!" running meanwhile as fast as my feet could carry me toward a lighted room.

When I next saw Spicy, her face wore that radiance which told me that her heart was at peace. Their engagement was speedily announced, and her wedding-day fixed for the first of February. Mr. Gildersleeve had greatly desired to be married during the holidays, but I would not consent. Spicy should be mine until the return of Leonardus.

Miss Terrapin was in her element. It was vastly more interesting to make wedding-garments than any other. It was Miss Terrapin's special forte. She thought Spicy might as well give up the whole care of it to her. But Spicy had ideas of her own about how she should dress as a bride. I was diverted by their frequent collisions, and not unfrequently called in as an umpire.

Miss Terrapin said, it had become a chronic necessity in these days for women to dress elegantly, yes, even extravagantly, in order to command their husband's little attentions, which were so apt to be bestowed elsewhere than at home. Marriage was in her opinion the grave of love. At all events it was a se-

vere test, for it brought intimate associations to bear upon unequal and ill-assorted dispositions, habits, tastes, temperaments, and capacities. And when, by reason of tender age (Spicy ought to have waited until she was twenty-five), inexperience, or the force of circumstances, such grave considerations were overlooked, then, of course, unhappiness and every other conceivable misfortune would surely rush in. She told my dainty little morsel that her own character was continually developing, while that of her husband might be said to have attained its growth.

"Then you would recommend that the deficiency be filled with dry-goods, if I understand you rightly?" modestly inquired Spicy.

"No, no; yes—well, that is, if young people have indulged fancies when their affections were immature and their tastes undeveloped, and they have become entangled for life with wants unsatisfied and feelings unsympathized with, they should make it a matter of principle to increase their personal charms in every possible manner. The country is full of rich people, the stores are laden with beautiful and expensive goods, there is a great deal of competition among ladies in regard to the quality and style of their apparel, and a young wife with the means at her command should unquestionably take the front rank if she wishes to retain the love which she fondly supposes her own."

"On the contrary, Miss Terrapin, I am full in the faith that there is no virtue, nor one amiable characteristic of our sex, that would not be relieved of a bane and nursed into healthier life, if this non-

sense about imperative fashion and costly dress were abandoned. Too much thought altogether is given to the subject. I believe in suitable attire. I like an exhibition of good taste at all times and places. If one hasn't any taste of her own, I say, employ Miss Terrapin. But I sha'n't buy as many silk dresses as there are colors in the rainbow for the sake of having a variety, nor have what I do see fit to buy furbelowed to my eyes. Neither shall I spend a whole year's income on the trimmings to my underwear. I had rather do as Mrs. Vance does, give my money to the poor, and I believe Fred would agree with me, if he was to be consulted."

"Ah, Miss Spicy, that is how women deceive themselves. Men never show what they really are until they have secured the prize. To-morrow there is a wedding, and then comes another to-morrow when there is despair and humiliation of spirit."

"Pleasant prospect! Miss Terrapin, you are an inveterate croaker. There, that shall be your name hereafter. Croaker! how do you like it? Now, Croaker, let me tell you a short story. It is as true as the book of Acts. Fred never fell in love with my rig. He first met me in a ball-room where I was dressed the plainest of any one present, and, he says, he asked to be introduced to me because he couldn't help it. Every time he saw me afterward was when I was in my very worst look, and yet he went on loving me like the apple of his eye. There is no mistake about it. He has proved it, hasn't he, Meddie? And he is going to live on proving it. You cannot stir in me the ghost of a doubt."

"Oh, yes. Admitted that he adores you—at present" (Spicy laughed with the old, silvery cadence), "but I have never heard any account of your intense reciprocation."

"Really, Croaker, that is too bad! I ought to have worn my heart on the outside as one wears a neck-ribbon, so that every one I met could have told the color!" And Spicy's little ireful retort took effect. "Meddie, what did you think when you found me sick in New York and nothing ailing me? Love! what is it? If to go through every phase of heart-anguish until it becomes a positive luxury is love, then I was in it for certain, although I did not know, myself, what was the matter at the time. I thought my life had all gone abroad never to return. When time tried the keenness of my despair I took alarm, refused to be so comforted, and marshalled all the sources of my distress anew. I should have defied the old tyrant with silent lamentations too grievous to be borne until the present day, if Fred had not returned. Come, Croaker, you understand all about it, wasn't that genuine love?"

"I dare say. But I never saw the man who had the power to affect me thus, and I have seen a good many in my day. You are foolish not to have bead trimming on this velvet. It is very much worn this year. But you must let me finish your black silk with it. It will be elegant round the postilion."

Mrs. Vance sometimes sat a whole morning with us in the sewing-room, and her lively off-hand descriptions of things and events, and her brilliant characterization of people, and ready repar-

tee, when Miss Terrapin advanced her old and threadbare theories, the pet prejudices, cobwebs rather, of a spinster over sixty, and liable every day to get older, gave agreeable variety to the dull round of needle-work, and kept our senses whetted.

There had been no disenchantment in regard to my favorite, none whatever, since that first morning when, in my heart of hearts, I swore allegiance to her. She was the sort of woman who could love another woman with a whole-souled, earnest, heart-deep love. There was no assumption of superiority over others of her own sex. Her friendship deserved a better name than friendship. Hers was an elevated standard of merit, and I appreciated her rich gifts both of mind and of character. She was altogether devoid of flippancies, and yet gracefully, tenderly feminine. Sometimes, I found myself picturing her as the wife of some Leonardus whose tastes and aspirations harmonized with her own, and who recognized and valued her with a just estimate. She was clever as men are clever. She understood affairs, and had the power to centralize thought, and crystallize around her the highest forms of intellectual activity. She charmed men of mind by her clear, logical, and yet sprightly and piquant way of talking. She was a great reader, and never failed each day to devote some hours to study. If she only would go into society a little more! It is true she occasionally attended a dinner, or a private evening-entertainment, where I had urged her presence as a personal favor to myself, but ordinarily all her responses to invitations were the same sweet negative. I

wondered if her equipoise would bear the test when she came to meet Dr. Gildersleeve, as she certainly must at Spicy's wedding. He had gone to Europe with his invalid wife, and was travelling on the Continent now, but had promised his brother to be back in time, even if it involved another trip across the high seas.

My intimacy with Mrs. Vance was such that I visited her as she did me at any time of day or evening, as inclination or convenience dictated. Latterly, since Fred Gildersleeve was so much at our house, I often spent the evening with her, as I was more lonely in my lone room, with the happy pair in the parlor below me, than if no one had been under my roof but myself. On such occasions, she often read aloud, and we discussed the various points in magazine articles and new publications.

One evening I found her out. I went as usual to the library, which was her family sitting-room, where her venerable "Aunt Mary" was looking over a pile of letters. She was looking for her son's last. He was in Memphis, starting a business of his own, and when she found it begged me to excuse her while she wrote an answer. I took a book from one of the shelves to beguile the time. It was Sparks's "Life of Washington," an old edition with gaping wounds in the back. I turned to the fly-leaf in front and read the following in pencil: "Found on a railway-car, June, 1861.—I. E. V." At the same moment, a slip of paper fell into my lap from among the leaves, and I read what was written upon it before I took time to consider that it probably had been left in the book by accident,

and was not intended for other eyes than the writer's. It ran thus:

"I awake to a new existence. Poverty stares me in the face. I hear a whisper of labor and effort, which is in itself a whisper of peace. Henceforth, no more passive suffering, but a search for something to do. Oh! had my life but been blended with that one man's, whose heart my own comprehended! But hush! What is life, when we come to analyze it, but a mixture of three component parts, joy, sorrow, and work? Some get tolerably equal proportions of each; some unequal, or they fancy so. I believe the same things come alike to all. Years ago, when I was wading breast-high among summer-flowers, I heard a sainted lady say, 'If your trouble can be helped, help it; if not, bear it.' I did not comprehend the force of the passage then, but I do now.

"Yes, I have had days enough of bitter thinking. I suppose many a one before me has felt the sharp, slow, deadly pain, which gnaws at the root of things. But, was there ever a warm, loving heart so cold and comfortless? What is the matter with the sunsets and the dawns? Why is that great mid-day orb riding through the sky so royally but to mock my woe! I am a sad woman defrauded of rest. My heart is a storm-beaten ark. Who says that the hand that metes out the measure to us all never yet held false balance! Can I square myself to God's will, and bury my griefs so deep that no human eye can ever pierce the wound? Can I be whatever I will to be? Can I form and accomplish worthy purposes while my heart is withering and shriveling away? Can I walk alone and with

no faltering tread? Can I build on the heaped-up ruins of my cruel past a structure that will survive all future storms? Can I remember the simple fact that if life is a burden it has been imposed by God? The answer comes slowly and painfully, but comes; I can, I will."

I put the paper back into the book, and the book upon the shelf, and threw myself into an easy-chair to think. Shortly after, I heard the front door open and close, and Mrs. Vance's voice from the parlor. She had company. She had been to the weekly prayer-meeting, for she was a rigid church-member, and a gentleman had returned with her. It was a Dr. Greer, a dapper little man, with a head as round as a Spitzbergen apple, and covered with sandy locks, slightly flaked with white. He had a bright, agreeable countenance, upon which was stamped, however, the label, *Englishman*, and was one of the large real-estate owners of the city. He had had several business transactions with Mrs. Vance since she came in possession of her uncle's property, and then he was one of the elders in her church. I had always known him, always meaning the period of time that I had lived in Chicago. I could not see him from where I sat, but the parlor doors were open into the library, and I heard a part of the conversation. He had been saying something in an earnest but choked voice, to which I had paid but very little attention, when her reply, equally low, but more distinct, reached my ears, and the remembrance of it thrills me even now while I write:

"I shall never marry again, Dr. Greer. I have taught myself to look

forward to a blank existence. There is no staff, however dear to the womanly nature, upon which I may ever lean sheltered from the wind. I am outside of the pale within which married joys are found. There is a sorrow in my heart which the world knows not of, but one which I trust is healthfully borne. I lost the cordial drop with which Heaven graciously saw fit to sweeten my cup. I had my era of romance, a short-lived, delicious holiday, since when every fibre of my soul has been sharpened by the various ordeals which I have been compelled to pass through. My lines have not fallen in pleasant places. I should not be a fit companion for a man so pre-eminently worthy of a woman's best love."

There was a brief silence, and then I heard Dr. Greer's broken voice again, although I could not distinguish his words more than that they were indicative of a question. She replied :

"He was a gentleman in the highest and finest sense, always and everywhere a gentleman. I am ever ready to defend and justify my girlish affection. It has ennobled my whole life. By it, and through it, I have been so enabled to perform my duties and the work laid out for me, that there has been no time left for unavailing regrets. I believe I am a far better woman than I should otherwise have been."

Dr. Greer must have thought she was speaking of her husband, of whom he knew nothing, but that he had been killed in battle. But I, with my queerly-gotten knowledge, translated differently.

Mrs. Vance did not come directly to the library after showing Dr. Greer out.

Aunt Mary took off her spectacles and laid down her pen, and wondered where Ida had gone.

"She can't know that you are here?" she said to me.

"Oh, yes. My hat and shawl are on the piano. She could not have failed to see them."

My servant came for me a little later, and, thinking best not to prolong my stay, I ran up-stairs to bid Mrs. Vance good-night. I paused at the door of her room which was ajar, and on her knees before the flickering grate, with her head resting on an ottoman, was my dear friend, sobbing in the perfect *abandon* of grief. My first impulse was to fly to her and mingle my tears with hers, but the consciousness of what I knew, and how the knowledge had come to me, and of the barrier which she had interposed against all intermeddling with her private affairs, restrained me, and I went slowly back to the library.

"Good-night, Aunt Mary," I said ; "don't mention that I have been here, unless Mrs. Vance makes special inquiries. I think that she does not know it, and, if not, it is just as well."

Too much wisdom is sometimes very embarrassing. It was decidedly so in my case, for I wished to have a little private reunion about a week before the wedding. Leonardus was home, Dr. Gildersleeve was expected, and Fred and Spicy were in that delightful mood to be pleased with any proposition, which would fall short of an excursion through the tunnel under the lake, the new and original inlet by which Chicago was arranging to borrow fresh water from an oceanic fountain. It was in process of

completion, and the chief wonder of the century. It was visited by thousands of people, but we had voted it too much of a bore for our personal investigation.

A dinner-party without Mrs. Vance! It could not be thought of. Would it be right for me to bring two persons together when I was the possessor of the secret of both their capacities for suffering? I put the question to Leonardus. He was unwilling to advise. Her carriage rolled up to the gate while we were discussing the question. Leonardus caught his hat, but I arrested him in his exit:

"Do stop and see her; why such haste?"

"I thought some other moment might be more favorable for my introduction."

"Nonsense!"

She was ushered in directly. She was dressed in heavy black silk and mantle of fur, her bonnet was of dark velvet the shade of the fur, and a handsome lace veil which was attached to it was thrown back, showing her lovely face just surrounded by a rim of white, with purple flowers over her forehead. It seems to go against all the ordinary canons of taste, but the white was becoming to her nevertheless. It was a sort of background for the dazzling whiteness of her complexion, from which no soft rose-flush ever went and came, but which was illumined by the rich blue of her beautiful eyes. It was so much her natural instinct to be courteous that she would have met my husband just as she did, under any circumstances, warmly through her love for me, with kindly remembrance from his having been a guest once in her own house

in Boston, as well as a friend of her deceased husband. The allusion to their former meeting was frank and outspoken, but quickly passed by for other themes, and it was impossible not to feel that the door was permanently closed upon any further mention of it.

A northeast snow-storm had just set in, a blustering reminder of my perils of the previous winter, and I rehearsed a few experiences, which were as yet new to Leonardus, and we all chatted gayly. Presently, there was a flutter and a welcome, and Spicy was creating a little ripple in the air by her presence in the room. She wore one of her pretty, fresh merinos, a garnet I think it was, and all the dainty, crisp bits of lace and bows of ribbon that are among the crowning triumphs of millinery seemed to have lighted upon her neck and wrists.

"I am expecting Fred every moment," she said, smiling. "He has gone to the cars to meet his brother, and if he finds him, and he can be persuaded, he is going to bring him directly here for me to inspect."

"And what if the brother does not suit the bride?" asked Leonardus.

"It will be a grave consideration," replied Spicy.

"And what of the brother's wife?" I asked.

"Oh! did I forget to tell you? She is not coming now. Fred has had a telegram. Dr. Gildersleeve has left her at a German cure where they hold out hopes of her ultimate recovery. He will return to her after he has seen us safely married, and attended to a few business-matters. He has struck oil. That is, the company that he has stock in, have

struck, and he is likely to have his pockets well lined."

Then we all fell to discussing the oil question. I had always considered it a sort of lottery enterprise, and had been very much opposed to any investment of our funds in that direction. Cousin Phil had sunk all his own and his mother's property in the region of a Michigan well, and was there now waiting for something to turn up. Others had met with like misfortune. Oil had suddenly become the great topic of the day. Men of all classes and conditions were excited on the subject. A few shrewd minds and well-formed companies had won. Ministers and editors had, in many instances, invested, while careful businessmen superintended operations. That Dr. Gildersleeve should have bought shares did not surprise me, but I begged of Leonardus to run no risks.

Mrs. Vance took the earliest moment for leaving, and as Leonardus returned to the house, after having handed her to the carriage, I asked him what he thought of her.

"That the secret and charm of her singular sway over the intellect is not only her genius, but her genius all warm with the woman. She perplexes the fancy, and affects unconsciously those among whom she is thrown, as the magnet the metal. In my opinion she understands the world far better than the world understands, or ever will understand, her."

"And what about the dinner-party? I feel as if that little point must be settled."

"Give as many dinner-parties as you like. Invite Mrs. Vance by all

means. She will settle the question herself."

"Do you mean that you think she will decline my invitation?"

"I do."

Spicy was just leaving the room, seeing no doubt that our married eyes were quite content with one another. Leonardus stopped her.

"Spicy, have you ever spoken to Fred about those old letters and their contents?"

"No. Why?"

"Because I don't think it is right that you should. They concern two persons whom we have come to highly regard, and with whom we are very nearly connected. The Gildersleeve family, it seems, never knew of Grandison's early love-affair, and the facts which have become so painfully apparent to us ought not to be by any possibility betrayed. Don't you agree with me?"

"Yes. But it is dreadful to think I must keep a secret from my husband! I wish we had never found the letters; I always said no good would come of it! I knew from the first that we should be sorry that we read them!—and I had the feeling that they were to be mixed up with my destiny, and they are. I commenced telling Fred about the ghost one evening, but he interrupted me to tell a ghost-story of his own, and I forgot to finish mine. As for the old picture, I was keeping that to surprise him with on our wedding-day. I suppose I ought to bury the whole subject, since one point cannot be touched without explaining the whole. But it will be the cloud of my life."

"You are a dear, good, reasonable

girl!" I exclaimed, throwing my arm around her. "The cost to you will be trifling, in comparison to the disagreeable embarrassment which may be warded from others by your darling caution."

"They've come!" she exclaimed, springing toward the window, as two gentlemen alighted from a hack in front of the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BRIDE AND THE BROTHER.

It was a pleasant meeting for us all. Fred Gildersleeve introduced his brother to his promised bride, with very much the air of a man who was reciting a poem of which he was exceedingly fond. It was interesting to watch his face, while he was watching them. Dr. Gildersleeve brought a full bouquet of roses to Spicy's cheeks by remarking:

"It is no longer a matter of surprise to me that the Benedict was ensnared."

I was glad to meet Dr. Gildersleeve for many reasons, and Leonardus shook his hand with the utmost cordiality. Outwardly there were few points of resemblance between the two brothers, except in height and *physique*. They towered above ordinary mortals, and were both men of remarkably fine presence. Fred was dark, and the wavy, brown hair, which we had read of in the love-correspondence, was getting more wavy and brown every day, and an elegant mustache set off his handsome face to great advantage. Spicy's young-lady friends pronounced him "splendidly fascinating," and represented themselves as

dying with envy, and, were there any more such in New York if they should go on there and attend a boarding-school?

Dr. Gildersleeve was lighter, fairer, older, but one whom it would be difficult to pass in the street without a second look. He had an attractive face; character, culture, and power, shone from it. I esteemed him much the handsomer man of the two, but there is no accounting for tastes. His active brain and cheerful mien kept reminding me of the little verse:

"God means every man to be happy, be sure;
He sends us no sorrows that have not some cure.
Our duty down here is to do, not to know;
Live as though life were earnest, and life will be so."

I noticed that he never spoke of his wife, except when questioned.

"I think she is afflicted with some terrible malady," said Spicy, when we were alone again, "because I notice that same peculiarity in Fred. He seems to avoid the subject, and once or twice has remarked upon the eminence his brother might have attained in scholarship but for domestic interventions and constant nursings. He says Grandison is a great thinker, a ready writer, just saturated through and through with genius; in fact, got all the brains in the family, and all the goodness, too. It makes me laugh to hear him go on. He says he would like to be as good as his brother, but he wasn't born to it; he only holds on to good principles by the edges, the greater part of the plank escapes him!"

"We must find out whether Dr. Gildersleeve was really the author of that new volume of 'Synonymes,' which Mrs. Vance was showing us last week. You know what we thought about it."

"Yes, it was he; I inquired of Fred. And he is just now upon the eve of publishing another large work. Fred has copies of all the books he has written, and after we get back from Washington I am going to make myself familiar with every page of them."

"Washington! My dear child, that word makes me think of twenty things which ought to be done this very day. I have put too much off until the last week, which is always my way, you know. I am glad you are more systematic and sensible. No thanks to me, you have been my example for many months, instead of I yours, which would have been more according to Hoyle."

"Don't disparage yourself, Meddie; you are the darlinest sister in the world—"

"As well as the most improvident. I am glad I have you to defend me."

"Mrs. Vance will step into every niche you leave unfilled, as usual—"

"There it is, again—'as usual.' It is true, and very humiliating to reflect how much I do lean upon Mrs. Vance. I wish I had ever been able to stand alone."

I did not give the dinner-party, but both Dr. Gildersleeve and Fred dined with us nearly every day until the great day of days. It was a beautiful week—a sort of enchanted episode—particularly to the lovers. But you know the story. When you lived it you did not find it tame, or old, or commonplace. It is sweet and sacred to all who have ever dwelt in the charmed atmosphere. Spicy was not once flurried in the matter of preparation, although she exercised a close supervision over every thing appertaining to her toilet. Miss

Terrapin had bent to work under orders, whether they suited her notions or otherwise, and her brideship was always ready to receive and entertain Fred without any apparent cares. Not so with your humble servant. I was like Martha of old, careful and troubled about much serving.

Mrs. Vance did not come to see me once. I was too busy to go to her, and, consequently, we did not meet. I missed her more than I could have made any one believe, and fully realized how much I had been in the habit of consulting her in matters of every-day life. Fred, who had been accustomed to see her at my house so much since he first became a visitor, noticed and commented upon her absence. I heard him describing her to his brother one evening, as among the few women who really knew how to handle a fortune consistently, and then he entered into an elaborate picture of her charities, her homes for the poor, and her hospitals and good works generally. Dr. Gildersleeve was interested, and remarked that he should like to know her. Ah, he little dreamed how well he already knew her!

I wondered if the meeting with Dr. Gildersleeve was going to prove to her a martyrdom as formidable as the fagots and the stake! For, of course, she would meet him at the wedding, even if she deserted me until then. Alas! I had counted without my host. I awoke one morning stranded on a barren shore. A note was brought me from my sweet friend, saying she had been summoned to Buffalo to look after some long-unsettled business-matters connected with the estate of her deceased brother, and

should probably not return for some weeks. She expressed regrets at being compelled to forego the pleasure of making one of our happy number on Tuesday, and enclosed a darling little note of congratulations and kind wishes to Spicy. A little package was also delivered by the same messenger, and tears were swimming in the eyes of the bride of to-morrow, as she held up for our inspection an exquisite and costly set of pearls.

Fred and Spicy were married in St. James's Church. There was an unusual display of elegant toilets on the occasion, a crush of silk, gossamer, and lace—it was said that the *crème de la crème* of both the north and south sides were present—the white-gloved, white-vested ushers ran to and fro, and were all affability and attention; friends saw friends and bowed from pew to pew, uninvited guests crowded round the doors and in the galleries, and the great organ pealed forth a joyous strain. Then came the hush!—and every eye was turned in eager expectation. Yes, they were coming!—and, as the imposing party passed up the aisle and divided to the right and left, and Leonardus gave away the bride, and the ceremony was duly solemnized, there was a stillness which might have revealed to quick ears the thuds of my heart, for I remembered there and then that I had forgotten to put on the broad belt and buckle, the crowning glory of my grand *moire antique*, and, what was all the more painful, I remembered just when I had forgotten it—when Leonardus called me, and told me that I was keeping the whole crowd in waiting. But, as the happy pair turned to leave

the church, there was a change in the programme, and the clearly-defined murmur of admiration which reached my ears all along the route—for I was not far in their wake—swelled my sisterly heart almost to bursting, and led me into the comforting assurance that my own attire had not been criticised. I had, or rather took, time to finish dressing before taking my two hours' stand in the parlors. The reception over, and then came the adieus, and the wedding-party were on their way to Washington.

I was anxious to finish the day better than I had commenced it, so I straightened all my parlor furniture before I retired. I rolled one sofa over my foot, and then cried. A little arnica relieved the pain, and a cup of coffee put me to sleep. It keeps most people awake, but I am sorry to say that I am not like most people. The next day Maggie found me crying again, and asked me what was the matter, and I told her that Bright had shut the door against my finger and pinched it. Later, the cook came to ask me some trivial question, and was greatly distressed to find me crying, and I appeased her anxiety by telling her that I had just discovered that the sewer was out of order, and was overwhelmed with dread at the prospect of having plumbers in the house. Last of all, Leonardus came late to dinner and found me crying! He learned, to his infinite amusement, that I had come to grief because the pea-soup was cold! He spent the evening with me, and tried to teach me the glorious principle of taking life as I found it. I had not lost a sister, I had only added to my possessions a brother, and still had a husband who would shield me from want

and provide for the morrow, and, as a living evidence of the assertion, he took me in his arms, and with a smile, which disclosed a depth in his nature I never had known, he pulled the scarlet bow from my throat and fastened my collar with a new diamond brooch. And then he talked to me as only a true lover can talk, and the more I looked and listened the more I discovered in him perfections unnoticed before. Ah! all that soul said to soul, or that heart gained from heart, in that blessed interview who shall enroll? What is it that so often chills two beings who are united for life? Not the absence of love so much as the ignorance of how love is nourished by love.

We expected that Fred and Spicy would spend their first wedded year with us; but, immediately after their return from the bridal journey, there was a change in their plans. Fred had been more successful in some of his speculations than he had even anticipated, and decided to purchase a handsome marble-front house on the avenue, which was in the market at a bargain, and go to house-keeping. They fitted it up prettily, but did not furnish it all at once, reserving their choicest selections until such time as convenient to jaunt East together and explore the world of art and beauty.

It was April before Mrs. Vance returned, to find Spicy for a neighbor on the next block below her. She called immediately, but she declined Spicy's first invitation to dinner, and did not visit me quite as freely as heretofore, although there was not the slightest change in her friendship or demeanor. Dr. Gildersleeve was not with us often. I hoped she was not staying away through fear

of meeting him, but I dared not speak to her on the subject.

And while I was revolving the question in my mind, the air was all at once solemn with the tolling of bells! Minute-guns reverberated from mountain to mountain across this great continent! The cities, the towns, the hamlets of our broad land were draped in mourning! The nation's heart had been touched by the finger of death! The President of the United States of America had been felled by an assassin!

Chicago was in tears. Men spoke to each other on the streets with quivering lips. Merchants closed their stores. Black and white goods seemed to fall as with one accord from every building. Five years before that very month, the same city blossomed with flags and echoed to the booming of cannon, and the jubilations of assembled thousands, as the news was announced that the convention in the Lake-Street Wigwam had nominated Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, as its standard-bearer. Chicago honored and loved him. It was in her courts that he first laid deep and broad the foundation of his legal attainments, and gained that distinction which placed him peerless among the ablest counsellors in the land. It was Chicago who first summoned him from comparative obscurity in a political sense, and watched with pride his wrestle with an able and cunning debater, until his sagacity and honesty and purity had been established beyond question. Chicago had sent him out a brave, earnest, hopeful, Christian man to save the country. And, just as his work was finished, the Republic vindicated, its enemies overthrown and suing for peace, he had

been slain—slain, while interposing the hand of his great charity and mercy between the wrath of the people and guilty traitors!

A few days later, and the people of Chicago tenderly received his sacred ashes, with bowed heads and streaming eyes. No other community did itself such peculiar honor by the vast magnitude, the perfect order, and the solemn beauty of the funeral obsequies. About thirty-six thousand persons participated as members of organized military, civic, municipal, educational, religious, and other associations, apart from at least one hundred thousand citizens who thronged the line of the procession from curb-stone to house-top. Leonardus was one of the grand marshals, and took me at evening to the broad hall in the court-house above where the remains were being viewed, and where over one hundred of Chicago's best singers were assembled, who, with soft, sweet, melancholy strains, added sublimity to the universal sorrow. A pitiless rain was pouring upon the long lines of people who surged through the rotunda during the sad hours of the night, but it occasioned no diminution in their numbers. At intervals dirges, both solos and concerted pieces, were sung, suitable to the time and place. At midnight a beautiful and impressive dirge was chanted by all present with thrilling effect. It was one of the most interesting incidents of this long-to-be-remembered occasion.

Charity! Scarcely were the remains of our loved chief magistrate laid in their native earth, when charity was again the theme in Chicago. Another Sanitary Fair, to raise funds to minister to the

wounded and dying men of our armies; a Fair prodigious in its proportions, gorgeous in its display, admirable in its arrangements. Chicago laid the corner-stone of the finest palace ever reared by civilized humanity, when she inaugurated the first Sanitary Fair. New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Boston, and other cities, reared thereon a glorious superstructure, and now Chicago was determined to crown the lofty dome amid the clouds—an everlasting monument of the gratitude and generosity of the American people.

The two great armies of the Union were on the homeward route. They had won magnificent victories, accomplished vast results, came off more than conquerors, done and dared and suffered all that men can do and dare and suffer in the cause of popular government and human freedom, and justice and right. They were returning to exchange the discomforts and privations of the camp for their own firesides. They had poured out their blood in rivers. They had left their dead in thousands; but they had crowned the nation with present blessings, and heaped up for it prospective honors. Chicago was not content with bestowing medals on the living, and rearing statues in memory of the fallen. Veterans, who had left positions of honor and profit, which were now filled by others, must be cared for. Those who had come back incapacitated for work by reason of wounds, must be cared for. Hence this gigantic Fair, which culminated in magnificent success.

I took an active part in the art and trophy department, and was doomed to four weeks of hard labor. Spicy was

there, Mrs. Vance was there, everybody was there who was not in some other department. No one thought of staying at home while the Fair lasted. It was a continuous holiday, a gay festival, which was fully appreciated and enjoyed by visitors, though a season of incessant toil to those who were employed therein. But all were inspired by love for the cause, and hardships were hailed as a positive pleasure. And still, with steady tramp, the heroic legions came—not as they went, with gay colors and full ranks, but worn, weary, bronzed, with tattered rags fluttering in the breeze, and vacant places in their ranks. They were all welcomed at the Fair by the truest hearts that ever beat responsive to the calls of gentle philanthropy.

Neither last nor least came our two great generals, and enthusiasm was at its height. I looked around me, wondering whether the building would stand the crush, or yield, like the Temple of Dagon of the Philistines, under the pressure of Sampson—for surely I knew they brought the gates of other cities with them. Half bewildered I saw Leonardus among the celebrities on the platform, and presently a rich, deep voice pronounced the words of welcome to our illustrious guests in behalf of the managers of the Fair. It was that of Dr. Gildersleeve.

General Grant called upon Governor Yates, of Illinois, to respond for him, which he did. The cry of the multitude was then for General Sherman, who arose and remarked pleasantly :

“I am not here for the purpose of making a speech; I am here, like yourselves, merely as a spectator. I have

always been ready to obey my loved commander-in-chief, but I am sure he will not order me to make a speech.”

General Grant, standing near, smiled, and, advancing, said :

“I never order a soldier to do any thing that I cannot do myself.”

How the hall rang with applause at the happy retort !

On some accounts distinction may be desirable, but it is certainly invested with many inconveniences and perplexities, which detract sadly from its pleasures. I was led to that sage remark by the remembrance of how General Grant made many and hopeless efforts to see some of the beauties of the Fair. The crowd followed his most trifling movements. We made one grand effort to inveigle him into the picture-gallery, which was one of the finest collections of paintings ever exhibited on this continent; but it was a hopeless failure, and his arms were nearly wrenched from his shoulders by the eagerness of the multitude to grasp his hand. Fred Gildersleeve said he would rather be happy than great; and I thought Spicy, who stood leaning on his arm, looked very much as if she coincided in the same opinion.

Dr. Gildersleeve sailed for Europe in July. A little later Leonardus took me to the White Mountains and to Newport, and during the autumn following we went to Havana, so that for nearly a year I spent but a few weeks at home. When I once more returned to our newer civilization and my corner house, I was introduced to a young lady who was the fac-simile of my sister Spicy, as seen through the wrong end of an opera-glass. She was the baby of babies. There had

never been another before her, in the estimation of her delighted parents. Fred stopped Leonardus on the street to tell him the color of her eyes. Spicy told me, to the hour and minute, how old she was when she first laughed.

But if Miss Lulu Gildersleeve was the most remarkable girl who ever crammed her fists into her mouth, and screamed when she was not rocked or jounced about, then I hardly know how to impress you with the importance of the characteristics of the young Chicagoan, Tobias, who appeared upon the stage of action about a year and a half later, and who could exact more attention, and drive more nurses frantic, than any other youth of his size in all the West.

The years were gliding noiselessly by. Stirring events were not the fashion any more, either in city or household. We had fallen naturally and easily into old relations and habits, and Miss Terrapin continued to quote me among her customers. Mrs. Vance was still my bosom friend, and we both entered as heartily and graciously as ever into any and every plan which brought us together. We fully reciprocated each other's entertainments and invitations; we had our readings and our literary circles, and, except that Mrs. Vance had gradually widened the sphere of her acquaintance, there was no perceptible change in the atmosphere of our intercourse. She was called the brilliant Mrs. Vance by those who were favored by an admittance to her select little gatherings, but the subtle undercurrent of her life was Christian charity. The good she did in her quiet, unpretending way could not be told in a thousand volumes, and all the graces

of benevolence seemed to pursue in her train. The poor followed her to praise and to bless. She wrote occasionally, sometimes a story so effective in narrative as to utterly astonish me; then, again, poetry would reel from her pen, revealing sympathies ready and keen, and a large, warm heart ineffably tender and loving. She never published any thing under her own name, but her impersonal articles frequently found their way into the leading periodicals. She was essentially healthy in mind and body, and I felt that no one sooner than she would have laughed to scorn sickly fancies and imaginary woes.

Dr. Gildersleeve was in Chicago a part of every year, and in Europe the remainder. But he was always very much engrossed while in the city, and the collision between himself and Mrs. Vance, which had seemed to me almost inevitable, had never occurred.

Spicy's home had grown to be one of the most charming in Chicago. They had furnished it by degrees, never buying any thing that was not the most choice, as well as the most costly, of its kind. Their parlors were gems of beauty, and every thing was in the most perfect taste; their paintings would have graced the mansion of any connoisseur in art. In the great whole they had studied effect with so much effect, that the most pleasing effect was produced.

Spicy named her second boy Grandison, and received from his uncle on the next Christmas an elegant little *coupé*, and a pair of beautiful horses—"nobby" Fred called them—as a token of his appreciation of the notice. Spicy was one who rarely ever showed exultation over

any thing of the kind; but, when she drove over in her new carriage to call upon and show it to me, her eyes were ablaze with delight. I wished the giver could have seen her with her whole soul speaking from her face as I did, and he would have realized the exquisite pleasure he had conferred.

"Dear Meddie," she said, "you know how I have always wanted a carriage. It has seemed of late as if my life, or some one else's life, or something of exceeding great magnitude, depended upon it; and yet, I would not for the world have been so foolish as to have asked Fred to buy one until we were older, and more dignified and sedate. Now it has come unexpectedly, just as every other good thing has come to me all my life! Isn't it nice? Don't you like the trimmings? Oh, I am so happy with it!"

Leonardus had business that promised to detain him in New York City through most of the summer of 1871, and he went out to a little village of villas on Long Island Sound, and rented a furnished cottage. It was a beautiful point, shaded and picturesque. I enjoyed the salt air and sea-bathing, and Bright was happy as a young king, with his twenty acres of private play-ground and his cliffs and grand old trees.

Fred and Spicy made us a flying visit in August, and it so happened that Mrs. Vance was able to time her summer's journey to meet them at our house. We exhausted our country resources for their amusement; fished and rowed and yachted, played croquet, took lessons in swimming, and drove over the fine roads in our little dog-cart. Last of all we

went on a shopping-expedition to the city, in view of a gay winter in Chicago.

We had done all the prominent stores pretty thoroughly, and were hurrying toward the New-Haven train with our hands full of packages, when Spicy remembered that she had promised to call upon a friend in Harlem, and this would be her only opportunity. Mrs. Vance proposed to go directly home, while I went with Spicy to the Third-Avenue cars. We had to stand at first, as people who ride there usually do, but at last obtained seats by squeezing in between two large women. When we went to get out at One Hundred and Twentieth Street I missed my pocket-book. I told Spicy on the platform of the car. She thought we had better look for it, and while we were talking the car started. I spoke to the conductor, and he looked on the floor to see if I had dropped it. I stepped in and assisted in the search.

"Wall, indade, an' I thought it was you yourself, Mrs. Belmore. Say, an' have ye got a good cook now? I'm jest lookin' for a place, an' I makes things illigant you know, an' I can come right away too."

It was the large woman, who had been sitting next me, who thus addressed me, and it took but a second look for me to recognize in her my Ann of Chicago memory.

"How do you do?" I said, pleasantly. "Did you see my pocket-book?"

"Bless your dare heart, an' was it yours sure? I picked one up on the floor—here it is!" and my property was again in my possession, to my great delight. "Where do ye live, ma'am? I

can go right away with ye — I'm all riddy."

"No, I don't want a cook; I'm obliged to you."

Spicy had stopped the car, and I stepped along to get out.

"You have taken us somewhat out of our way," she remarked to the conductor.

"Sit right down, ladies, and I will take you back again," he replied.

We both remonstrated, but the horses were taken off one end of the car and attached to the other end, and we were set down at the right corner. We both laughed; it was a courtesy never before shown us on a public conveyance. As the conductor assisted us off, he lifted his hat, and said:

"Tell General Belmore that Tom Harris remembers his kindness at Vicksburg," and as we had to hurry to the sidewalk, to get out of the way of a carriage, we had no chance to reply, for the horses speedily came round to the fore-end of the car, and it started off at a brisk rate to make up for lost time.

"Poor Ann; so she has not acquired honesty by length of years," I said.

"And yet she cooks jest as illigant as ever," remarked Spicy, with a laugh. "Who ever expected to meet her again? It has brought that old ghost-affair all fresh to my mind. It was very mysterious about that apparition in the blue-room, wasn't it?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

DR. GILDERSLEEVE'S SUNDAY-EVENING CALL.

It was one Sunday evening, shortly after our return from the sea-shore, that we were agreeably surprised by a call from Dr. Gildersleeve. He had arrived in the city on Saturday morning, and taken rooms at the Sherman House. He had brought his wife with him this time, although she was able to be moved only on a bed. Her mother, Mrs. Hortense, was in attendance, but herself suffering with a sprained ankle. He had been so fortunate as to secure in New York an old nurse who had lived with them while in Peculiarville, and congratulated himself that the ladies would both receive all necessary care.

I expressed great interest, and asked if a call from me would be agreeable to them.

"Certainly. But Mrs. Gildersleeve's mental condition is such that I am afraid it will afford you but poor satisfaction. During the past twelve years she has had but few lucid intervals, and I have but little hope left that her reason will ever be restored."

A gust of wind blew the front-door open, and Leonardus sprang to close it.

"Did you see the fire last night?" he asked, addressing Dr. Gildersleeve.

"Yes. I was in the editorial office, writing an article for the next issue of my paper, when I was informed of it, and went over to the west side. I saw Dr. Greer at work upon the roof of one of his large buildings, endeavoring to save it, and, knowing there was but one means of exit, I considered him in great

danger, and with much difficulty succeeded in gaining admission in order to warn him. The danger was averted, however, and we remained together all night on the roof, looking down upon the many burning blocks, the greatest conflagration it will probably ever be our lot to witness."

"Have you seen Spicy?" I asked.

"Yes, I ran in a few moments yesterday. What a charming mother she makes! I found her entertaining her three little ones with a miniature velocipede, which she had just bought. My precocious little namesake was intent upon experimenting personally, and toddled after the contrivance until it was overtaken, and he had crowned his ambition by a seat upon it. Poor fellow!—he took his first lesson in the perishability of earthly joys," and a rare smile played over the face of the speaker.

"Did you see Fred in New York?" asked Leonardus.

"Yes, I stopped at the St. Nicholas, where he stays. He will be home in about two weeks. He is making so much money that I am afraid he will not know what to do with it, and I have been advising him to take a rest. I know of no one more supremely blessed than he seems to be in his business, and in his family. He ought to be, and is, I believe, fully appreciative."

Was he drawing comparisons, this man of such singular balance of character, and the records of whose honorable and prosperous career were so devoid of blemish? My thoughts were turned into another channel, the next moment, by his remark:

"General Belmore, it strikes me that

in all modern history there is nothing quite so marvellous and captivating as the growth of Chicago. I am more and more impressed with it every time I return from abroad. The immense hotels and business-blocks which have shot into being within the last five or six years, stop me in wonder as I pass them. It appears almost incredible that the site of such a city as Chicago is to-day, should, forty years ago, have been only a great, reedy, miasmatic marsh on the shore of an inland sea!—and that an even dozen of log-cabins gave shelter to less than a hundred fur-dealers. See!—it is but a few years since, tired of the mud and marsh and miasma, she lifted herself to six or eight feet of higher level. I shall never forget my sensations when I first saw large hotels suspended in the air, while new foundations were being laid and new basements built. There seems never to have been any project too bold, or enterprise too great, for her to undertake. She has been sufficient for herself in all emergencies. She takes rank with great capitals. Hers, after New York, is the best-known name in Europe, and there is no story too wild in relation to her but will obtain credence there. Now, since the bridges have not been found adequate to the demand for travel across the river, highways have been constructed underneath, and to conquer that same river, which was obstinate about discharging its filth into the lake, the lake has not only been turned into the river, but the whole emptied into the Gulf of Mexico!"

Leonardus, half reclining on the lounge, with his cigar in the tips of his

fingers, laughed, without answering immediately.

"And yet the whole world, and Europe in particular, will persist in styling us 'brags,' if we by chance mention such facts. I think that if there is any class of men entitled to the privilege of bragging, it is those who have lent their aid toward making Chicago what she is," he said, at last.

"What a gale!" I exclaimed, starting up as one of the shutters came against the window with such force as to shiver a pane of glass.

"It is a terrible night! I believe I will hurry back to the hotel before the rain sets in. These southwest winds are portentous," and Dr. Gildersleeve rose and buttoned his coat.

Leonardus went to the door with him. He called me directly to see the new fire, which was lighting up the heavens with a strange, unnatural hue. Dr. Gildersleeve said it must be full five miles away. Leonardus remarked:

"You go to bed, Meddie, and I will walk over to the south side with Dr. Gildersleeve and see where it is."

"Oh, don't!" I exclaimed, with much anxiety in my look and tone.

"Never fear, wifey, I sha'n't go to the fire; I shall be back in an hour at farthest," and he kissed me and went on.

People were just hurrying home from church through streets brilliant with gas, some being drifted along without effort of their own in a northerly direction, while others were contending against the sharp storm of dust in order to reach localities nearer the river. One of my servants, who had had a "Sunday out,"

returned just then, and, seeing me in the door-way, turned to come up the steps, and was blown against the railing with such force that her hand was bleeding. I took hold of her and helped her in, and it required all of our united force to close the door. The gas-jets in the hall and parlor had all been extinguished by the fury of the blast, and we had to relight them.

I was not robust in health, and thought best to retire. My room was in the northeast corner of the house, the most remote from the street, and the least likely to be penetrated by noise or disturbance. I drew my shutters together close, and pulled down the shades. The bells rung near by for a few minutes, and then stopped. I wondered how the fire would be subdued in the face of such a wind, and wondered who would be able to alleviate the ocean of misery it must occasion.

I fell asleep, but only to dream of Leonardus and fire-bells. I waked several times, just enough to think, "Why, the whole world must be on fire!" but I slept again after each waking. A little past midnight I started up, whirled up the window-shade and looked out. The heavens were one broad, lurid glare, except when great black fiery columns of smoke rushed past. The sight appalled me. Where was Leonardus? Why had he not returned? What fearful disaster was impending over Chicago?

I shivered with cold or nervousness, it mattered not which, and I drew down the shade again and got into bed and covered my head with the bedclothes; but I slept no more. I was hearkening, constantly, for Leonardus's step in the hall.

He would certainly come soon to tell me the terrible news, whatever it was. I could hear men screaming and swearing in the distant street; I could hear a strange roar, which I supposed was the wind. Then came a jar, and a reverberation like distant thunder.

What was that? My door-bell!—ringing, ringing, ringing! Would it not stop long enough for me to get to it? Leonardus must have lost his key. Down the stairs I flew, not even taking the precaution to throw a shawl about me. No, it was not Leonardus; it was Mrs. Vance's coachman, and he wanted to bring Mrs. Chafferlee, Mrs. Vance's dear aunt Mary, in. Would I help him? Why, what is the matter—is the whole south side on fire? Yes, and Mrs. Vance had sent her to me for safety.

I caught a water-proof from the hat-rack—it was singularly fortunate that it should have happened to have been there, one good result of negligent house-keeping—and ran out to the carriage with bare feet. What help could I render, slight, frail, weak creature that I was, and Mrs. Chafferlee, though much emaciated by reason of old age and long illness, being of a large, bony frame, full twice my size?

"I can get hold of her, ma'am, only I am rough-like and hurt her," said the kind-hearted coachman.

"Never mind, never mind. Make haste; I want you should get back to Ida," came from the feeble voice inside.

The great, clumsy fellow grabbed her and ran up the steps, I holding upon the skirts of her dress just enough to retard his free progress. He laid her upon the sofa in the parlor, for he was afraid he

should drop her if he undertook to ascend a flight of stairs. Then he ran and brought in a basket, and a bundle of loose things tied up in a shawl.

When he was gone, I tried to light the gas, and it would not burn. I wondered if any thing had happened to the gas-works. The room was almost as light as day, however. I got a pillow for Mrs. Chafferlee, and fanned her, for she seemed faint. Some of Mrs. Vance's valuables, I supposed them to be, had scattered through the hall when the coachman threw them in, by the untying of the shawl which held them, and I went out and gathered them up. I did not stop to look at them, I only noticed a jewel-case, some packages of papers, marked important, a small ledger, and—could it be possible!—yes, the very identical little picture of Bright, upon ivory, which I had given to Nursy Brown eight years before!

The whole mystery of that "*person*" was thus suddenly revealed. I saw it all—her incomparable goodness, and the greatness of the woe which could have driven her to such a refuge. And the germ of all that love, with which she had since been bound to me—ah, the secret she had probably intended to keep until her death! What a strange, new light had burst upon me—what a horrid light was glaring in from without!

I must dress. I could not be running about the house in that condition, and people coming, too. Others might fly to us as well as Mrs. Vance. I called Bright, my little man of ten years, and told him to slip on his clothes and run down and stay with "Aunt Mary," while I made my toilet. Had I better call the

servants? Monday was a busy day for them, and it was hard that they should lose their sleep.

I had got my hair up respectably, topsies and all, when I concluded I had better call the servants, and ran through into the wing where they slept. It was their first waking, and they were stunned with the horrid spectacle from without.

"The fire is on this side of the river, I am sure," said Maggie, who was one of those rare appendages to the household who had proved faithful for many years.

"Oh, it can't be; there is no danger here," I replied. —

"And the clothes-lines will all be getting full of soot and dust, and I shall have such a boggle about drying my clothes this week again," whined Esther, the cook.

I hurried to my room and took down a heavy alpaca dress to put on; then the heat was so great, or I was feverish, and I changed it for a lighter material. I could not find my collar with the double points, and then I took a distaste to the Roman scarf I had worn that Sunday, and actually spent several minutes hunting for a "made bow" of scarlet, with which to adorn my throat. My overshoes were lying upon the floor in one corner of my room, and, without knowing why, I put them on; then I spread up my bed, put away my brush and comb, picked up loose pins, and stuck them in the cushion, and, last of all, took down a little feather-duster, which always hung by the window, and dusted the bureau and table. I was literally setting my house in order.

Bright called me. "Aunt Mary"

was so still and didn't speak to him, and he was afraid something was the matter with her. His eyes were very large—they resembled two luminous fire-balls—and I ran my hand through his soft hair to reassure him. I found she had fainted quite away, and threw some water in her face, which had been left in the parlor overnight, and she breathed again presently. Once she spoke:

"It seems as if the last great day had come. I am afraid Ida will be trampled to death. She got out of the carriage to help a poor woman."

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed. "But Richard will surely find her," I said, a moment after.

The noise without grew louder and more ominous. It seemed as if a legion of demons had been let loose in the streets. Then there was a jar, like the one I had heard before, which stilled, or seemed to still, for an instant, the surging crowds. Could it be thunder, while the stars were shining?—for I had seen them a moment ago. No; it was gunpowder, and the terrible suspicion flashed upon me even then. Bright, peering through the lace on the vestibule-windows, saw blazing sparks and bits of burning wood light in our front-yard.

"Mamma, our house is catching! We must run! Come, come, come!" he screamed, tugging at my garments.

I looked out, and surely a wall of fire was advancing upon our midnight helplessness. Where, oh, where was Leonardus? Where was Mrs. Vance? What should I do with Mrs. Chafferlee? I put my two arms around Bright and groaned. But the man in him was not for standing there idle.

"Let me go for a carriage, mamma!"

"My boy, how could I let you out into that terrible street?" and so great was the roar and din, as if earth and sky were rushing to ruin together, that I had to raise my voice to be distinctly heard.

Bright put his face close to the window once more, and I stood looking through, just above him. The fire was tearing madly among the beautiful mansions not a block away. In different directions a dozen great sweeping scythes of flame seemed trying to outrun, and then made horrible dashes into each other. The swirls of smoke and sparks swept over the fire-chased throngs before our eyes. Frantic men were dragging bundles and trunks; women were running in their night-clothes; little children, with ghastly faces, were visible now and then, and afterward lost to our sight; trucks, filled with goods and people, and carriages, drawn by struggling, foaming horses, and lined with white, scared faces, were flying on, on, onward.

"Is it hell, mamma?—and will it overtake us anywhere, that you don't try to get away?" came from the philosophic little boy, and I had no answer to give in my terror-dazed despair.

What is that?—a carriage stopping? Who—yes, it is Leonardus! And I opened the door, admitting a volume of smoke and ashes and flying gravel into the hall, which nearly put out my eyes. He was already upon the steps; his hat was gone, a piece of blue mosquito-netting was tied over his forehead and eyes, and his coat was torn and dangling in shreds about him. I should have rushed into his arms with a cry of joy, but he put me back:

"Not a minute to lose, wify. Catch something in your hands—what you care to save most—call the servants.—Bright, spring into the carriage.—I'll carry out Mrs. Chafferlee."

"What I care to save most!" I repeated to myself, as I flew wildly to my room. I opened a closet-door and took down an Astrakhan cloak and put it on, pulled the counterpane from the bed, spread it on the floor, and, from a bureau-drawer, pulled out a quantity of underwear, rolled it up, and, with the bundle in my hand, rushed down to the door. The wind took my bundle from me, and nearly twisted me over the railing of the steps. In a moment Leonardus had his arm firmly round my waist, and assisted me to the carriage. Maggie was there already, supporting Mrs. Chafferlee's head in her arms. Esther was waiting to get in, and was begging some one to go for her trunk. Bright came running with his cat and his dog, one under each arm, and his stamp-album in his hand. Last of all Leonardus pushed in my bundle, slammed the door—there was no room for him—and told Richard to drive to Mrs. Grant's, on Clark Street, about two miles farther north.

Great firebrands were falling all about us, and the horses reared, plunged, and snorted. At the very first move forward the wheels were interlocked with those of a heavy omnibus, and I thought we were going to be hopelessly broken down. Diagonally across the street a handsome three-story house was burning; and, looking back to see what had become of Leonardus, I was just in time to witness the huge serpent of hissing

flame which was springing from the roof of our own darling cottage. Where had it come from, and how could it have got there so soon? Ten minutes more, and only a pile of red-hot embers marked where our home had been. There were dense eddies of smoke all about us, which every now and then cleared away with brilliant scintillations. The moving figures appeared like imps of brimstone. Our terrified horses began to neigh, and it was with difficulty that they were urged along. I was more like one dead than living. I saw, and yet I felt that I saw not.

"Isn't that Miss Terrapin?" screamed Bright in my ears.

I looked the wrong way. He put his hand on my face, and turned it round to where two women were drawing another woman in a chair. But they were too far behind now for me to recognize them, even if they had been persons whom I knew.

"The lady with her beckoned to us, and threw out her arms, and I think she screamed," continued Bright.

"I suppose so—everybody screams," I replied.

I should not have spoken quite so mechanically if I had known that it was Mrs. Vance herself who had made a frantic effort to arrest the attention of her own coachman, and who was toiling along on foot, determined to save other life than her own, in the maddened crowd, with the great, blasting, seething, reeking sea of fire chasing and exhausting her.

Would the wilting wind never die? In one awful moment a bright blaze seemed to detach itself from the main

body and leaped over our heads, dropping down into the street about a block in advance, rendering the whole pathway a sea of flame. What should we do? To turn back was certain death. The side-streets were already blockaded. It was only go on. Richard applied the lash, and the excited animals tore through the passage. We bounded against vehicle after vehicle—once with such force that Bright was thrown against the glass in the carriage-window, breaking it.

Saved!—but stop, there is a wagon on fire loaded with mattresses, and a lady in her night-clothes leaping from it. She is all ablaze! Who will help her?

"Richard, Richard, leave your horses and run to her! No, some humane individual has anticipated you, and the fire about her person is extinguished. But stop, I say; let me call to her."

"Dear me, and you wouldn't carry my trunk, and the towels are in it that my good mother sent me all the way from Ireland!" growled Esther.

It was impossible to induce the horses to stand still, and a man, who could think of others as well as himself in that awful hour, took them by the head, and I seized the lady by her hand and drew her into the carriage with us.

"I don't know where you are going to get the room if you invite all the folks you pass to ride," continued the grumbling Esther.

"Let me curl down anywhere," cried the lady, with a frantic gesture.

Should we ever get to our haven? Cursing men, shrieking women, terrified horses, were everywhere impeding our progress. People, with heavy burdens, were constantly getting entangled with

wagons and carts and outcasts. Many ladies had put on their finery to save it; others, like myself, had grasped for the least important of all their possessions. Invalids were being borne on stretchers, old, gray-haired men were hobbling on crutches, feeble women were panting and fainting, and yet dragging themselves onward, sometimes clasping huge bundles. I saw one half grown girl carrying a drop-light, and a lady in a dressing-gown of chintz and a velvet cloak running with a tumbler of jelly in her hand. It was an extraordinary scene—horrible, ludicrous, mournful, and grotesque, as the visions of a nightmare.

We arrived at Mrs. Grant's house at last, and went in. They were packing and preparing to leave. There seemed to be no place for us there. I asked for something to wrap round the lady whom I had befriended, for the sun was up now and she had no clothes. I never knew when the sun came up, and I hardly recognized its fiendish face, constantly changing and making grimaces at our misery. Nor was it hardly lighter than when, in the night, I had first looked out into the firelit darkness. I knew that Mrs. Grant couldn't save every thing, and she might give the stranger a dress. I said so, and she told me to help myself to one, and I did. I found a pair of stockings, and a pair of gaiter-boots also, and a sea-shore hat. I looked in the lady's face while I was trying to draw her scorched and tangled hair out of her eyes, and saw that she was pretty and young—that is, if you call thirty young. I do. I don't know but I asked her who she was, for I did a good many things that day that I do not hold myself ac-

countable for; but, at all events, I learned that she was married only the week before in New York City, and was with her husband in Chicago on their wedding-trip. They were stopping at the Tremont, and had no time to dress after the first alarm that the hotel was in danger. They succeeded in getting themselves and their baggage conveyed to the corner of Rush and Indiana Streets; but the fire followed so rapidly that they were obliged to fly farther, and her husband disappeared. She did not know what became of him, and, after being jammed along with the crowd for a time, she managed to get between the mattresses on the wagon, from which she had narrowly escaped with her life into our carriage. Such was Mrs. Huberjide's experience.

But our terrible foe was opposed to our taking a rest. On, on it came, licking up the pretty cottages, and the blocks of brick and marble, and the stately churches, and the mammoth breweries, and the massive water-works, leaving only charred and blackened and smoking masses in its wake. How far must we be driven?—we, who were already six or seven miles from where it first started!

Leonardus came at last. I scarcely knew him, he looked so haggard and dirt-begrimed.

"Where did Richard go with the carriage?" he asked, breathlessly.

I did not know; I had taken no notice of the coachman after he had deposited Mrs. Chafferlee on Mrs. Grant's bed. I might have been more thoughtful, that is, if I had been anybody else but Medley Belmore.

"If he is hopelessly gone, then I must try to find some other way of removing you," exclaimed Leonardus, running out into the pitiless fire-storm.

"Where is General Belmore?—will he help us?—what is he going to do?" and similar questions, reached my ears from different members of Mrs. Grant's family, as I watched him running up and down, this way and that, jostling with the motley mass of fugitives on their fearful race for life, and, at last, leading a raw-boned, jaded mule up before the bay-window, with its fanciful drapery, from which I had seen agony and suffering enough depicted on the passing faces to have filled more books than the world could hold. A mule—what was he going to do with it? No matter where he had found it. Somebody said he took it forcibly from a boy, who had been left as its keeper. I should not be surprised if that was so, for civilities were only the exceptions, not the rule, on that day. Bright, dear, loving Bright—never was a boy more truly named—ran out to his father and was sent for Mrs. Grant's clothes-line. Then was manufactured a harness, such a one I am sure the world has never seen. A grocer's wagon, which had lost a wheel and been left to its fate in the middle of the street, was resuscitated through some manipulations with which I am not familiar, the mule fastened to it, a mattress of Mrs. Grant's laid in for the comfort of poor, distressed, but patient Mrs. Chafferlee, the rest of us huddled as compactly as possible, and with Leonardus to lead and coax the astonished and protesting mule, and Bright bringing up the rear with his cat and his dog, we joined the grand hegira.

It was a wonder that we were not all smitten with total blindness from cinders and overwhelming dust. The wind was a hurricane, and we could scarcely hold fast enough to the wagon to keep from being blown from it; and it was doubtful whether the wagon, even, would hold together until we could be transported to a place of safety.

The prairie at last! And in a dry ditch by the side of the way we alighted, for both harness and wagon had failed. Night—tearful, illumined, tempestuous night—and the skies only for our covering; we who had until now been so well housed and cared for. The story of prairie-fires was fresh in our minds, for all over the West the woods were still burning, and the fiend was in sight, not so very far away. Might we hope to escape the still greater danger in store for us? Leonardus spoke hopefully and worked manfully. He was trying to hitch the fractious mule to the refractory wagon—and we awaited our fate.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FIRE ON THE SOUTH SIDE.

MEANWHILE where were our friends? I learned later, but my readers shall not be kept in suspense. When Leonardus and Dr. Gildersleeve reached the Sherman House the night before, people were in great excitement about the fire, which was on the west side, between De Koven and Polk Streets; and among the warped and weather-beaten shanties, where the streets were unpaved, and littered with old boxes, broken barrels, mildewed papers, and other tinder, as dry and crisp

as if they had been specially prepared for the occasion. Dr. Gildersleeve went to his rooms to look after the welfare of his wife and mother, and, finding them resting quietly, proposed to Leonardus to go and inspect the movements of the firemen, and see what progress the flames were making.

The sky was lighted up for miles around, and the river looked like a vast stream of blood. They went to the top of several large buildings, and finally proceeded southwestward as far as Van-Buren-Street bridge. The firemen were working like heroes, but the fire had got under headway and the winds were blowing a gale. The poor people, who were being made houseless with a rapidity which defies description, were throwing beds and all kinds of furniture from the windows of tenement-houses, into heterogeneous masses upon the sidewalks, obstructing the passage to and fro of the fire-companies, and preventing what little chance there was of staying the onward rush of the flames. Leonardus found the marshal of the fire department, and, after a brief consultation, telegraphed for him to some of the neighboring cities for immediate help. But, of course, it must come slowly. Fire-engines could not be telegraphed back. Milwaukee was the nearest point from which they could be obtained, and hours must elapse before they could arrive from there. Then Leonardus organized a body of men to work upon the roofs of buildings, and extinguish burning embers as they fell in advance of the fire, which had already lighted up the whole district, and was sweeping all before it into utter nothingness. But what

general could outgeneral the great potentate of the elements? Little fires were breaking out everywhere. There was a confusion of flame and smoke near the ground; while tall buildings, like islands of living fire, stood up, sending out their skirmishing parties to almost incredible distances. The firemen were baffled, because they never could reach the outskirts of the fire. Every time they moved back, and took a fresh position, the fire went over their heads and flanked them.

Meanwhile Dr. Gildersleeve was with the city authorities, counselling in matters of the gravest moment. In less than three hours over twenty blocks of buildings had been laid so low that no landmarks, save a few stunted chimneys, were left to tell where they once had been. The fire had spread more than a mile from its original starting-point, and was making straight for the heart of the city. Prompt measures for the transportation of gunpowder, and the blowing up of buildings, was the result of a collision between quick, decisive minds, and the work was not for an instant delayed.

The fire-bells clanged and clamored, and the church-bells put in their discordant tones. People ran into the streets to see, then through the streets without object or aim. Some ran because others ran, and some stood looking up into the red heavens, which also seemed on fire. The clouds, driven past by the gale, were like masses of angry flame-bearers of destruction. And still the fire kept on, coiling itself round building after building, like a venomous serpent greedy of its prey. Great lumber-yards disappeared like dissolving-

views, and the freight-depots of the Chicago and St. Louis, the Pittsburg and Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroads, were swept of every vestige of an outline.

Don't let it cross the river!—work my brave boys!—turn the bridges! Ha! they are on fire already, as they stand there in the middle of the stream pointing up and down. But, don't let it catch on the other shore—work! Steady at the helm! Put out the firebrands as they fall—work, I say! The demon is reaching over, and trying to thwart your efforts—he is throwing missiles into dangerous places. There!—see!—he has got foothold! The wooden buildings adjoining the gas-works are blazing. Oh, oh, oh!—The gas-house itself has gone, and the great city is lighted only by the fires with which it is being consumed!

People ran madly, crowds meeting crowds, and each in their fright trying to push their way through each, and many were trampled to death in the desperation of the moment. The vessels in the river took fire one after another in quick succession, the masts and spars falling like rain-drops in a shower, while, at the same time, the fire streamed along eastward, swallowed the great Michigan Southern Railroad depot, and innumerable blocks of large and small buildings around it, and the body of flame presented a front of half a semicircle, behind which was a crackling, raging, roaring hell of half a mile in depth. Nothing material could stand the surge of this tremendous sea. The panic-stricken and distracted mob were almost as terrible to behold as the roaring conflagration. They ran toward Lake and South Water Streets, and upon the

bridges, and then turned at bay like affrighted animals.

When Leonardus saw that the ocean of flame was irresistibly whelming every thing, and all reliance upon human succor was over, he hurried to the Sherman House to assist Dr. Gildersleeve in moving his helpless ones to the north side, not thinking even then that we were doomed. They met on the stairs and ran up together, encountering as they did so the hotel guests running down in every stage of dress and undress, and dragging trunks after them. Dr. Gildersleeve found Mrs. Hortense paralyzed with fright, and the nurse and his wife both gone! Mrs. Hortense could give very little account of what had happened. Helen had risen up and walked to the window, when she had not taken a step for years before, and, without speaking a word, had rushed from the room. The nurse had followed her, and neither of them had returned. Mrs. Hortense did not think that Helen could have possibly got out of the house, for, even if any unnatural strength had come to her in the terror and excitement of the moment, it would not be likely to have carried her far. Dr. Gildersleeve hastened to explore the hotel, while Leonardus assisted Mrs. Hortense to get a few garments wrapped about her preparatory to leaving. Dr. Gildersleeve ran back to say:

“Dear general, can you take care of Mrs. Hortense? I think I have got trace of Helen,” and was gone.

Mrs. Hortense could not walk, and Leonardus lifted her in his arms. He did not dream the danger was so near. As he was passing out of the door, a



“General Belmore carrying Mrs. Hortense through Dearborn Street.”

lighted piece of flooring, about the size of a butler's tray, was hurled through the window into the room just vacated, and the hotel was speedily hissing from every crack and corner. Down the stairs he flew with his burden, out the door, tried to stop a hack, hailed a flying omnibus, yelled to the driver of a one-horse dray, loaded with men and women; saw no way but to run, and kept running. A wreath of fire rushed up Clark Street after him. He thought the pavements were on fire, but he learned afterward that they were all intact. He reached Lake Street, could see that Clark-Street bridge was turned or broken, and made for State-Street bridge; but great fiery balls were rushing through the sky, lighting up roofs and cornices a full half-mile in advance. Good Heavens!—he discovered fires on the north side, and all around, and near State-Street bridge. Fearing he should be cut off in that direction, he turned westward, hoping to get through La-Salle-Street tunnel. The stampede was sickening. Men and horses were jammed into each other, women and children bruised and bleeding, and, with clothes nearly torn from their bodies, were screaming and moaning. All distinctions of class or nationality were lost; every life was dear to its possessor. Lake Street, with its long mile of glitter and show and costly warehouses, and wealth of goods, was in the jaws of the hungry monster. The flames were already overlapping South Water Street, the great wholesale centre, where seven-storied mines of riches stretched over another mile. What could a man, however strong and powerful physically, do with a helpless, groaning woman in

his arms? Should he push into that fearful hole underground? If he had been alone he would not have stopped to question, but could his burden ever be taken through alive? He made the attempt. There were no policemen to clear the way; every man must do his own pushing. Policemen had homes and wives and children, like other men. They had run to save them, too, like other men. But how was this knot of subterranean misery ever to be extricated? Leonardus saw one man trying to drag three little children through in a garbage-barrel. They were pinned fast against the wall by entangled humanity. The air was like a furnace seven times heated. He was losing time; he had been losing time ever since he started from the Sherman House. One great, mighty effort, and he crossed Wells-Street bridge. He never could remember how it was accomplished. It seemed as if he had been lifted upon the human wave, and tossed over. And then he made for Kinzie-Street bridge, to get Mrs. Hortense into some secure place to windward of the flames. Fighting against the whirlwind of ashes and smoke, he at last reached the west side, dropped Mrs. Hortense at the first respectable house he could find, and scarcely had turned to fly to our relief, when he blundered upon Richard, and Mrs. Vance's carriage, and learned how he had tried to get back for his mistress and found it impossible.

Spicy, in her elegant mansion on Michigan Avenue, was alone with her three little children and three servants. She had retired at her usual hour, and slept peacefully until awakened sometime after midnight by her husband's

book-keeper from the office, who told her what frightful progress the fire was making, and inquired if he had better unlock the safe and take out the contents.

"Certainly," replied Spicy; "I will go and do it myself."

"You! Oh, no!" and he remonstrated with great earnestness.

But she had not asked for advice, nor would she have been likely to have asked it of him, a mere boy, in her estimation. She dressed quickly, and ran to the barn herself to order her coachman to harness the horses, and bring them round to the door without a moment's delay. He was astonished, stared in the direction of the horrible fire, and declared he could not drive her gay team on such a night.

"Do as I bid you," was all she said, and ran back to the house to complete her arrangements.

Her cook was her most reliable servant, and it was she who was commanded to get ready to accompany the brave woman. The book-keeper might do as he liked, go or not go; if he went, it must be under her guidance. He sprang into the carriage with her, and they were whirled rapidly toward the scene of destruction.

"We cannot get any farther on Madison Street," called the driver down through the glass, stopping his horses at the corner of State.

"Drive on!" fell firmly from the lips of the little woman behind him, and he obeyed.

Down into Madison Street, amid the deafening roar of the furies, and the ceaseless thud of falling walls!—the horses, meanwhile, neighing in mortal terror, striking the pavements wildly

with their hoofs, and foam falling from their mouths in showers. Spicy sat erect and motionless as a statue of marble, not blind to the danger, not unmoved by what she saw and heard, but with one sole purpose in view, and spirit enough to put it in execution. The heat was so intense that their progress was not retarded by frenzied fugitives. The large buildings on the south side of Madison Street had already taken fire; a few daring men only ran along the sidewalk at intervals, and paused to scream into the carriage:

"You are a fool, madam! Back out of here!"

In front of her husband's office Spicy sprang from the carriage pulling the afghan after her, ran up the stairs, followed by Nora and the book-keeper, and in a twinkling the ponderous door of the immense safe swung open and a portion of the contents were hastily piled upon the carriage-robe, and the three caught hold of it and conveyed it to the carriage. The coachman was holding the terrified horses by the heads, and there was danger of their breaking away from him.

"Hire any one who comes along to help you hold them, and I will pay him his price," said Spicy, looking up at the bridge of fire over her, measuring her moments, and making a second trip to the office.

When they brought down their next cargo of books and ledgers in the carriage-robe, six men were hanging at the horses' heads.

"We shall all burn—the carriage will burn!" shouted the coachman.

"Take it to the corner of State Street, and I will meet you there," said Spicy.

"Don't go up again, madam!" yelled several voices, all in one breath.

But she had gone, and the awe-stricken servant and book-keeper had followed her.

It was the last time the carriage-robe was filled, and the three bore it to the corner of State Street, where they found the carriage, but with this last accession it was so full that Spicy could not get in herself. She paid the men ten dollars each who had helped to hold her horses, and then sent the driver with the valuables to the house of a friend in the extreme southern portion of the city. She did not think her own house was going to burn, but it was better that what she had saved should be elsewhere taken care of.

Then she started on her walk home. Wabash Avenue was a dense mass of human beings. Hackmen were the monarchs of the occasion, and were driving furiously without regard to life and limb, gentle breeding, tender sex, or the more potent influence of the star of the order of the guardians of public safety. There were none of the white-gloved gentry at the street-corners to help her over; but she reached the other side in safety, thanks to a kind, protecting Providence, and ran against Miss Terrapin. She was surprised, that is, if such a tame emotion as surprise could be mentioned with such scenes. Miss Terrapin was laden with bundles and a basket, had started for Spicy's house, frightened from her rooms on Lake Street by the near approach of the fire. They went on together, walking fast and speaking rapidly, and, when about half-way between Wabash and Michigan Avenues, both came near stum-

bling over a lady who had fallen upon her face upon the sidewalk.

"Poor thing!" said Spicy, stopping to raise her.

Miss Terrapin handed her bundles to Nora, and took hold of the other arm of the lady, and, assisting herself a little, she came to her feet. But she sank backward directly, and would have fallen again, had they not together caught her in their arms. Her face now was toward the west, and the crimson glare lit up every feature. Spicy and Miss Terrapin looked at each other at the same instant with a flash of intelligence and recognition mingled with horror. It was the same that had looked at them eight years before, from the closet of the blue-room in the old Dwight mansion!

It was a face that could not be forgotten. It was thin and emaciated then, it was thinner and more emaciated now, but still the same. The hair was dark and long then, it was white and short now, but the contour of that high, strange forehead remained, and impressed the mind just the same as before. The eyes emitted the same vivid lightnings, and the hands, which clung to their arms, were but too easily identified.

"My ghost!—after all these years," said Spicy, with compassion instead of fear in her voice.

The eyes came near consuming her, and then a harsh, hoarse response:

"You stole my letters!"

Miss Terrapin trembled, and would have dropped the woman but for Spicy's hold on her. The book-keeper had lent his slight strength to save her from falling, also, when he saw the two were unequal to the task.

"Who are you?" asked Spicy.

"Those were my letters, and you stole them and read them," she said again.

"What is your name?" persisted Spicy.

"Queen Dido!" and a maniacal laugh rang out above the awful sounds with which the air was filled.

"What do your friends call you?" Spicy was unruffled, but determined.

"I have no friends. I am going to the water over there; it is boiling—don't you see it?—I am going to take a warm bath," and she laughed again.

"What shall I call you? Lucy? or Maria? or Jane?" and Spicy's voice was entreating.

"I am not going to tell you. You stole my letters!—I wanted them, and you wouldn't let me have them. They were my Grandison's letters, and I loved him and every scrap of paper he ever laid his hand upon. Let me go. I am thirsty—I want water. Do you see that chariot of fire?"

"I know her—it is my sister Helen! Help me; we must try to carry her home," said Spicy.

"I your sister Helen; I thought I was your ghost!" screamed the maniac.

"Your husband is Rev. Dr. Grandison Gildersleeve—isn't he?" Spicy asked, quietly, "and I am his brother Fred's wife."

"What business have you to speak his name? You stole my letters!—I went for them, and you called me a ghost. But I wanted them, they were my letters."

"How did you get into that closet?" asked Spicy.

"Through the little window. It had

a slide, and you could not find it. I wanted the letters! I loved Grandison. I knew it was wrong to marry him, but you shall not accuse me. You stole my letters! I knew I was going to be a crazy wife. My father was crazy before me, but we never told him. I had been in an asylum twice, but we kept the secret—mother and I—because I loved him, and mother said he would forgive me. He has forgiven me so grandly, that my conscience has set the world on fire. When I am once in the water it will be put out—let me go!"

She struggled to free herself, but she had little strength, and they succeeded in carrying her to the corner of Michigan Avenue. The street was packed with people, like all the other streets, and painfully illumined. It was easy, therefore, for them to distinguish Mrs. Vance's carriage as it picked its way along, and for Mrs. Vance to recognize Spicy and Miss Terrapin on the sidewalk. She drew up immediately and got out, for the din was too great for her to talk with them from the window of her carriage. A few brief explanations from Spicy, aided by her ready intelligence, and the whole immediate difficulty was mastered.

That part of Michigan Avenue where they both lived might not burn. It hardly seemed probable, with the wind in the present direction, that it would. But it was best to be prepared. Mrs. Vance was taking her sick aunt Mary over to General Belmore's for quiet, as well as safety, and was then coming back herself to await results. She thought Mrs. Gildersleeve had better be removed there also. But, as she had improvised

a sort of bed in the carriage, she thought it would hardly be best to disturb Aunt Mary by trying to force the wretched lunatic in against her will, so proposed to stay with her herself until the carriage should return.

"You know your sister Meddie will do every thing for Aunt Mary if I am not with her, and I will take this poor lady there myself," she said.

"Miss Terrapin, you will stay with Mrs. Vance, I am sure; we will take all your things and take care of them," said Spicy.

She signified her assent, and Mrs. Vance begged of Spicy to hurry to her darling babies, and make it her first business to transport them to some other portion of the city.

After waiting a few moments where they were, and finding their burden sinking heavily, Mrs. Vance asked Miss Terrapin to go to her house and bring one of the light easy-chairs from her library. They placed Mrs. Gildersleeve in it, and dragged her gently along toward Rush-Street bridge, watching eagerly for the carriage, which they momentarily expected. But, as they advanced northward, they came more directly into the vein of the fire-tempest. They did not progress fast, for it was with agonizing delays, and at the risk of their lives, that they could cross the side-streets, which were pouring their overwhelming numbers upon Michigan Avenue. The carriage must come soon! Before they were aware of the possibility of such a thing, they were hemmed in by the frightened multitudes who were being driven toward Rush-Street bridge. For, suddenly, a great, expanding scythe of flame was

reaching over and around and beyond them, mowing immense and increasing swaths with alarming rapidity, and now and then sending columns of smoke and blaze hundreds of feet into the air, like solid and perpendicular shafts of molten metal. The mighty rush toward the north side had set in, and they could no more turn back. They were launched forth on a journey, the extent or the end of which defied the power of human calculations.

Spicy commenced packing as soon as she got home. And yet she did not believe her house was going to burn. When her carriage returned, she sent her children, with their nurse, to the house of the same friend who had just received her possessions from the office. The next thing was to try to open a safe, which stood in a recess at the end of the front-hall. It was a combination lock, and she could not remember the number. She knew it, but in the excitement it had gone from her. She spent some time over it, and finally sent the book-keeper to the telegraph-office to get a message to her husband in New York, asking for the simple figure, but he found the building roaring like an army of lions, and, after spending an hour or two in a vain effort to find to what point the apparatus had been removed, returned unsuccessful.

Meanwhile the carriage returned after the safe deposit of the little ones, and she filled it with paintings and books and silver, and sent it forth again; but it came back to her no more. They were preparing to blow up buildings on the avenue below, for the fire had swooped round, and was sweeping all before it

now toward the south, and vehicles were not allowed to come up from that direction. Adieu to hope, and all fancied security; Spicy's beautiful home must go!

That safe!—if she could only get it open. Impossible; but if she could get it to the front-door, and roll it down the steps, it would not melt when the building should come to fall. She stopped some men who were passing. Yes, they would do it for fifty dollars. The city was burning, and they must have their pay in advance. Spicy paid them. They worked at the safe for a few minutes, pulled it an inch or two, swore at Spicy for having made them try to kill themselves, and then went away! She hired a wagon to carry a load of furniture. Twenty-five dollars the man asked. Money first, furniture afterward. Spicy gave him the required sum. Her elegant parlor suite was put upon the wagon, but just then a man came running and offered the driver fifty dollars to take a load for him. Off went the goods upon the sidewalk, and away went the wagon. Spicy set to work at once with what help she could muster, and carried her treasures across the avenue upon the lake shore. It was a perilous undertaking, for every kind of vehicle was jammed in there. The fire, too, was close at hand. It had lapped up the Clifton and the Palmer House, as well as miles and miles of other magnificent buildings, and was whirling in great lurid eddies around the block just above. Spicy had succeeded in getting out many things; most of her carpets were on the water's edge, also bundles of clothing—she had rejected trunks as being too cumbersome—

beds, books, and crockery. She was running from a chamber with an armful of her husband's apparel, and was about to give it to Nora to convey across the street, when three or four vicious-looking men entered, and deliberately took the things from her and commenced trying on coats, vests, etc. She observed them for a moment quietly, then, with no apparent agitation, said:

"You are welcome to those clothes. I don't suppose I can save them. But I do protest against the way in which you are appropriating them."

They looked confounded, and one after another sneaked away with their booty. The last was a bloated Irishman, and, as he turned to look at Spicy the second time, she recognized our old moving man of May, 1862, and the subsequent robber.

Oh, that safe! It was Spicy's last tie. If she could only get it rolled out. The house was already on fire in the rear. What should she do? Must it be left to its certain fate?

A quick, rapid step through the hall, heard above the turmoil of the elements. She turned:

"Oh, brother Grandison!"

"My child! you must leave this place instantly. Is there a last thing I can do for you?"

"This safe, if it could only be rolled out the front-door. It does seem as if it might be done."

He caught hold of it; it moved. Spicy caught hold with him—a fly might as well have lent its aid. The book-keeper applied all his energies; he never knew before that he had so many. Nora pulled a few scattered articles out of the way,

and then got in the way herself. Bridget screamed: "Hurry, hurry!—the house is falling!" She had felt the hall-floor settle, for the safe was under way—it was almost to the door. Another push, another pull—another, and still another strain of strong arms and stronger wills—there, it is at the threshold!—it is over! Crash, crash, crash! It has taken the handsome stone steps with it; but what of that, it cannot melt now! Fred Gildersleeve's fortune is saved—and it has been saved by his wife!

But the fire, the merciless fire, had closed in upon them. Dr. Gildersleeve leaped over the ruins of the steps, and helped Spicy down. The others followed, but whither should they fly? They seemed to be enveloped in a sort of reverberatory furnace, like that employed to melt metallic ores. There was fire to the right of them, there was fire to the left of them, there was fire behind them, and there was fire over their heads. The torrid heats, and the lurid lights, had blotted out the sky. There was nothing left them but the lake. They ran down to its very edge. Dr. Gildersleeve, with the aid of the book-keeper, dipped one of the carpets into the water, and spread it over Spicy and her women; but, one blast of that raging sirocco, and it was dry and scorched like an ironing-sheet. He jumped into the water himself to extinguish the little fires which had caught in his shirt-bosom, and hair, and neck, and to prevent the heavy cloth of which his clothes were made from kindling. The book-keeper, blinded and frantic, jumped in also; but, while Dr. Gildersleeve sprang back on shore, and seized the drawer of a cabinet—the

first thing that came in his way—and dipped and threw water with all his might and main to keep the carpet wet, the young man, being a fair swimmer, worked his way along in the water and made his escape at Harrison Street.

Imagine, if you can, the most blinding snow-storm that ever was known, and the snow not snow but fire! Imagine yourself trying to breathe in it on a narrow point between an angry blaze—an ocean of blaze, I might say—and a murky sea. And even then you will only vaguely realize what Dr. Gildersleeve encountered in his hand-to-hand fight with the powers of the air. Repeating his own bath, every other moment, and throwing water upon the carpets with the desperation of a madman, he wore away the time until the huge walls near by had toppled to the ground, and the waves of death had rolled on. Spicy had saved a fortune—Dr. Gildersleeve had averted the still greater calamity, loss of life.

There was rest; but such rest! Fierce fires in every direction. Eyes blistered and blinded and stinging, and smoke and ashes enveloping them like a cloud. Dr. Gildersleeve sat down and looked at Spicy, who had withstood so much and so courageously. She was exhausted, half suffocated, but not overpowered.

"I am so glad Fred was not here," was her first remark.

"Why?" asked Dr. Gildersleeve.

"Because he would have been killed in trying to help everybody," she said.

Dr. Gildersleeve smiled.

"He would have kept his wife out of danger if he could, I fancy; but where are your children?"

"Safe, unless the fire never stops."

And Spicy gave him a history of her night.

"Poor Helen! how I thank you for your kindness to her! How fortunate that your friend was just in time to take her away in a carriage, beyond the reach of danger! But the fire is raging on the north side; they will have to flee miles, I fear."

"Brother Grandison, did you ever board in the old Dwight mansion, that odd little cottage which once stood on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Madison Street?"

"Yes, for a few weeks in the spring of 1862. We went from there to the Clifton, just back of it, on the corner of Wabash Avenue and Madison Street. Why?"

Spicy told him the ghost-story, and Helen's recent allusions to the letters, withholding the fact, however, that she had ever seen and read the documents.

"Now I understand to what Helen referred, when she persisted in talking about her *lost letters*. I supposed it part and parcel of her disordered fancy. I missed her several times late in the evening, and once or twice at midnight, and was obliged to put extra bolts upon my doors. And you recognized each other—how singular!"

"Don't you think we can get down the avenue by this time? I must go to my children."

"Not, my child, while Terrace block is burning. Look, look!—it is going over. Every thing is on a pretty general level now. Be patient, little one, we cannot help ourselves yet." And

then he went on and told her of his search for Helen, after she had escaped from her mother at the hotel. Some one in the office had noticed her as she passed by, so that he knew that she was in the street. She had on a dressing-gown of blue silk, which she usually wore in bed, and he hoped to distinguish her easily. He was confident that her strength would not carry her far, but, from various attempts which she had made to burn herself in the past, he searched for her in the direction of the fire. He believed she would approach it until prostrated by the heat. He groped along the red-hot pavements, peered into every dark corner through all the multitudinous streets and alleys, and only moved backward as he was driven by the fire-fiend. Passing along Dearborn Street, he ran against an old man, who was standing by a broad-paned window looking in upon a rare and valuable collection of paintings, the accumulation of many years of patient toil. He was groaning, as if in anguish of spirit.

"What is the matter, my good sir?"

"Have you a key?—oh, sir, have you a key that you think will fit this door? I have left mine in the pocket of my week-day pantaloons at my home over on the west side, and it will take me better than an hour to get it here. The building may burn before that time, and, oh, it is my all!"

"Those pictures are yours—are they?"

"Yes, indeed, and the finest stock in the city. What shall I do?"

"Break through the glass, and take them out!—or yonder messenger will

break the glass for you, and wind up your business at the same time."

The man's face brightened. He had not thought of such a rude way of entering the building. A few moments later Dr. Gildersleeve passed that way again, and saw him piling his pictures upon an express-wagon.

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. VANCE'S FOUR-MILE FLIGHT.

AND what of Mrs. Vance and Miss Terrapin, and their unfortunate charge? They had crossed Rush-Street bridge, borne along by the billows of that hideous, howling mob. They had been trampled, jostled, jammed. The bridge had turned while they were upon it, to let a schooner into the lake, and they had been overrun by the mad attempts of the multitude to jump upon her decks. Clinging to each other, and to the framework of the bridge, they had seen more than one person go down to a watery grave. Helen Gildersleeve had there made a frantic effort to free herself from her captors, and reach the coveted waters. Once she had nearly succeeded, and but for Mrs. Vance's wonderful presence of mind in interposing her arm, and grasping the shoulder of a little girl in the crowd just beyond, she would have been lost to them forever.

"Oh, ma'am, don't pinch me; you'll make me drop my birdie!" implored the little one, who was clinging fast to a precious cage.

Mrs. Vance reassured her, and just then a full-sized man jerked the chair

from under the invalid, striking Miss Terrapin, who was bending over her, in the head with such force as to blind her for a few moments, and send her bonnet and wig spinning over the railing out of sight. The man wanted the chair to drag a lady in himself, but the little girl was indignant, and with her free hand seized him by the coat-tail, and a brawny negro, whom she called John, wrenched it away from its purloiner and restored it to Mrs. Vance. A great firebrand fell in the middle of the bridge upon a white-haired man, who was being drawn by two women on a billiard-board, with his head downward. Then another fell in a cart, which contained some combustible material, and a bright blaze shot up all about them. The scene was terrific. There were so many vessels and tugs trying to get through, that it seemed as if the bridge never would close. It did at last, and was left burning behind them. Buildings were burning everywhere on the north side too. They ran, hotly pursued; they paused, took breath, and then ran again. People ran by them, leaped over them, struck them with trunks and pieces of furniture in passing. They could not get on as fast as others, because of their heavy burden. They were driven from square to square, along those miles and miles of interminable streets and avenues, always dragging the helpless lunatic in the chair. Hour after hour, and still the relentless fire chased, hissed in their ears, and spit horribly suggestive cinders upon their heads and necks.

Mrs. Vance had thrown a water-proof around her when she started out in the night, and it proved her salvation. It

not only saved her from getting on fire innumerable times, but it was the means by which she extinguished the flames which were constantly lighting the clothing of Miss Terrapin and Helen Gildersleeve. That great, hateful, fiery-looking ball in the heavens, which kept getting higher and higher, and which could be seen as the clouds of smoke cleared at intervals, telegraphed that it was mid-day. Then the day was waning, but not the fire. On, on it came, with a fury that is beyond the power of language. And on, on ran the two women, dragging the other woman in the chair. Once they took refuge in a cemetery. But the fire found them, and drove them on. The marble over the graves cracked and baked, and fell in glowing embers on the hot turf. Every inscription was obliterated, wherever the skeleton of a tombstone was left. The great receiving-vault, solidly built and shrouded with foliage, was attacked, and the dead bodies burst from their coffins as the fire tore through the walls.

What a day to remember! And each participant in that chapter of miseries has a story to tell, which will thrill their children's and their children's children's hearts to the remotest generation! May history never have such another to record!

No rest, no peace until they were hidden within the confines of Lincoln Park, without food, and the stars and the fire-clouds their only shelter. Mrs. Vance dropped on her knees, and thanked God for having brought them through so many dangers. Then she stroked the forehead devoid of mind, and tenderly kissed it.

The tumult and the roar had given place to a terrible silence. Seventy thousand people were huddled together. The delicate woman, the high-bred dame, the haughty banker, the revered clergyman, the tender infant, the hardy laborer, and the worst denizens of the worst localities. Now and then the air was rent with moans. Children cried for bread sometimes; but, exhaustion had absorbed fear, and many slept. Over others the settled quiet of deep, dull despair reigned supreme. They looked at each other as if their minds were far away. Some covered their faces and wept.

As the night air cooled and then chilled them, Mrs. Vance wound her water-proof about Mrs. Gildersleeve. That easy-chair had proved a faithful friend. It had worn out its legs in the service of its mistress, had come apart in the back, and its cushions were riddled as with bullets. But it was far better than the wet earth for an invalid. Mrs. Gildersleeve slept, while Mrs. Vance and Miss Terrapin watched. It was a quiet, marvellous sleep for one who had been raving all day. If they could only get her some food!

An old market-woman came along munching some cake, and sat down on the ground near them.

"Can you give me a little, just a crumb, for this sick lady here?" asked Mrs. Vance.

She had a compassionate face, that baked, fire-scarred woman; that is, a compassionate heart shone from it, and she put her hand in a dirty bag, which hung by her side, and produced a handful of crackers and gave Mrs. Vance,

who could hardly repress her tears of gratitude.

"I have no money here, but tell me your name, and I will some day reward you," she said.

"She is a very rich lady," Miss Terrapin remarked to the woman.

Ah! she had been a rich lady, but where were her riches now?

Helen Gildersleeve opened her eyes after a while, and Mrs. Vance tried to induce her to taste a cracker. She shook her head, and kept her mouth closed firm; she looked around as if she could not comprehend the weird, strange scene, the red glare cityward, the dark heavens above. Presently it began to rain. Mrs. Vance drew the hood of the water-proof down to shield the invalid's face, but she pushed it away.

"Where are we—what is all this?" she asked.

Mrs. Vance explained as well as she was able, and the hot, hollow eyes seemed to burn out the darkness between them, and turn into fire as they were fixed on her.

"And who are you?—an angel from heaven?" she asked, after having listened quietly for some time.

"Oh, no! A child of this world, very human and very hungry," was the reply.

"And yet you eat nothing, and try to put crackers in my mouth. I don't want them. I can't live if I do eat; I have never lived; I have only been a torment to every one whom I have best loved. Bring your face down nearer, I want to see your blue eyes. Grandison loved a lady once who had blue eyes—they must have been like yours. She

married another man. She was the cause of all his misery, else he would not have taken me and been cursed. Will you call Grandison?—I am dying, and I want him! He has been so kind; never a word nor a look of reproach all these long years. I must tell him how I deceived him!—I cannot die without telling him. It was because I loved him—I had no pity in my heart, it was all love—and now it has kindled a hell in the middle of a city! I might have known it would."

She had exhausted herself, and fell back listlessly, with closed eyes. Mrs. Vance changed the position of the chair, so that on her knees she could support the feeble head, and thus managed with her uplifted arm to shield the pale face with the hood of the water-proof.

"Do you think she is dying?" whispered Miss Terrapin, excitedly.

"I fear so—and yet, who can tell? Let her sleep, it may revive her."

There were groups of people near them. There was one man who walked up and down, like a sentinel on duty. His head rested upon his breast, and sometimes he counted aloud. Once or twice words like *dividend* and *insurance* fell upon the night air. He wore no hat, and the rain pattered upon his head. He kept up the steady tramp for hours, swaying to the right and left in his gait sometimes. At last he blundered against Miss Terrapin, who was on her knees by Mrs. Vance. The accident recalled him to himself, and he apologized. Mrs. Vance looked up, and he looked down into her eyes, bent lower and lower, as if doubting his own senses.

"Ah! Dr. Greer," said she.

He straightened himself immediately.

"I little thought of meeting you here," came sadly from his lips.

His voice aroused Mrs. Gildersleeve.

"Is it Grandison?"

"No; but it is a friend," said Mrs. Vance, soothingly.

"Will he go for Grandison?—ask him."

"To whom does she refer?" inquired Dr. Greer.

"Rev. Dr. Gildersleeve. Do you know him?" inquired Mrs. Vance.

"Know him!—ask a Chicago man if he knows Dr. Gildersleeve! Do I know there has been a fire? Excuse me, madam; yes, I do know him, and I honor and respect him, too, more than almost any other man whom it has been my lot to know in Chicago."

"This sick lady here is his wife," said Mrs. Vance.

"Is it possible!"

Dr. Greer regarded her sadly.

"She is very low, and, as you were once a physician, perhaps you can instruct us how to make the most of our slender resources for her comfort. A cup of tea, some slight nourishment, or a tonic, seems imperative."

"Nothing—call Grandison!" whispered the invalid.

But Dr. Greer had taken a tonic which roused him to action. The voice of the woman, whom he loved and admired above all others, had put mettle into his bones, and he was prepared to do her bidding. He forgot his stocks and profits and losses, and remembered that somewhere over toward the lake he had seen a woman trying to make a tea-kettle boil over embers from the burning

city. Away he ran as fast as his short legs could carry him, spreading himself, however, at full length over some snoring sleepers before he had accomplished a dozen rods in his haste and the darkness. But he was agile as if sixteen, instead of sixty, and was up and on. He ran against a little girl with such force that he knocked her down, and, stooping to help her up, was hindered by her despairing clutch.

"Oh, tell me where papa and mamma are!"

All kinds of household goods were on the ground; they were tumbled about everywhere. Dr. Greer was impatient with the many obstacles in the way of his progress. A man, stooping to minister to some sufferer, he leaped directly over, having gained so much momentum before seeing him that he could not stop. On, on to the destined point.

Yes, the woman had a little hot water; her old man had brought it all the way from the lake. She had been making tea. Wouldn't give him a drop, not she. "Folks must take care of themselves, and bring their own tea!" How could she feed all the rich folks and their grand ladies? She was good as the 'ristocrats now; they would know how it felt to be poor, she guessed. What was that she saw?—a five-dollar bill! Was the gentleman really offering her a five-dollar bill for a cup of tea?

"Take it, Janey!" whispered the owner of a pair of covetous eyes, in the darkness behind her.

"Well, yes; I don't mind accommodating, but I can't throw the cup in. I didn't save but two or three, and cups will be high now there's been so many burned.

No, wouldn't trust you to bring it back; don't know who is honest or who ain't. Two dollars!—is that it? I can't see very well. Never mind about the cup, I always like to do favors!" and, with seven dollars less in his pocket, Dr. Greer steadied a dingy cup of villanous-looking dark fluid in his hand, as he picked his uncertain and rainy way back to the ladies. Mrs. Vance used every effort to persuade Mrs. Gildersleeve to sip even one swallow, but in vain. Then Dr. Greer, with a grim smile, declared that the nurses should obey him if the patient would not; and Mrs. Vance and Miss Terrapin, with their crackers to help choke it down, divided the horrid stuff between them.

Meanwhile Dr. Greer borrowed some bed-blankets from a pile of goods, which was guarded by a small boy fast asleep, and the ladies were wrapped up and in a measure protected from the storm. Helen Gildersleeve was again slumbering. How they all prayed for the day to dawn! Dr. Greer felt her pulse, and shook his head. What could be done? Where go for help, when there was no help? The city was burned!

The rain came faster, and he took off his coat and held it over Mrs. Vance. She forbade his doing so, and he put his coat on again with a sigh. Then the rain subsided, and a heavy mist settled over them. Mrs. Gildersleeve struggled, and begged for air. Dr. Greer assisted Mrs. Vance in raising her partially, but the movement distressed her, and they were obliged to lay her back again. All at once she opened her eyes, and the light of reason seemed to spring from them.

"I am dying, and Grandison is not

here!—tell him how I wanted him! Oh, if I could but hear his voice in prayer once more! I used to mock him when he prayed, and I drove him from his church and people! Will you ask him if he truly forgave me?—and say I loved him, will you? Who, oh, who will pray for me? Will you?" And her quick, inquiring gaze was riveted upon Mrs. Vance's face, a face wan and worn just then, but, for all of youth's lost bloom, a face full of beauty which years could not ruin.

"Dear one, I will," was the touching answer.

And such a prayer as welled from her lips has rarely ever been heard. The sufferer listened like one afraid of losing jewels beyond price. She was grasping Mrs. Vance's hand, and pressing it to her heart. The strong man dropped on his knee; he had been a praying man all his life, but prayer was unfolding a new meaning to him now. When we are strong and well, and the needs of life come freely at our bidding, and we lie down to sleep in the full assurance of a peaceful and fortunate morrow, the tongue is apt to syllable its supplications very glibly, and it is easy to fancy a perfect measure of trust and confidence in the Father of all mercies. But when we are shut in as with a clasp-knife from every thing dear, it is no idle faith if sufficient to bear the test. It was a solemn and strangely-impressive scene—the occasion, the circumstances, the hour, the stillness, and the low, clear, steady voice, which was leading all present into a nearer, tenderer relation with the Ruler of events. There were tears coursing down cheeks unused to tears, and there were choking sobs back in the darkness,

for strangers had been creeping close to catch the words.

"Thank you—God bless you; I am better now!" And Helen Gildersleeve never spoke afterward. She lay as if in a calm sleep, breathing fainter and fainter. Dr. Greer and Mrs. Vance watched every pulse-beat. Suddenly there was a pause—her spirit had taken its final flight.

At about the same hour we had landed in a far-away prairie-farmer's home. But for Mrs. Chafferlee, Leonardus would have allowed us to remain on the roadside, as we begged of him. But the exposure was sapping the fountains of her life, and he made herculean exertions to reconstruct our equipage. At last we were once more on the highway to shelter. I don't know how far we had proceeded when Leonardus left his mule to adjust a spoke in the wheel, and the mule left us. I suppose he had got tired of such an unusual day's work, and concluded that his best friends were his worst enemies. At all events, he had freed himself from his novel harness and disappeared.

"Not much of a loss. I believe I can draw you myself!" said Leonardus.

He was in earnest, and I jumped out. So did Mrs. Huberjide and Maggie and Esther, and Mrs. Huberjide and Maggie volunteered to push the wagon from behind. We did not get on very fast, and the rain set in; but the great, awkward wagon-cover shielded Mrs. Chafferlee, and I did not mind for the rest. Esther wondered why nobody had thought to bring an umbrella! She was sure that every thing she had on would be spoiled. Leonardus told her he thought there would be time for her to run back and

get one, while we were travelling to the next station. He was bound to be cheerful, and his spirit was contagious. I laughed quite like myself, when panting and perspiring he halted and called out:

"Five minutes for refreshments!"

Esther did not see how grown-up women could go giggling along the road, after having had such a dreadful escape. Bright asked what made laughing wicked? Esther replied by muttering, "It is well enough for those who hain't got no feelings."

"I've got feelings," said Bright; "I feel as if I should like to give my dog a bone."

Mrs. Huberjide proposed to change places with Leonardus, and let him push while she pulled. I took hold with her, and we had quite a lively run down a slight descent. Esther was left in the lurch, and Leonardus made us wait for her to catch up. When she came alongside he asked her to ride, and Mrs. Huberjide and I laughed again.

We were not alone on that lone road. Wagons and stragglers passed us, but they took no notice of our primitive mode of moving. Once, while we were resting, Leonardus asked me what I had saved in my bundle. Was it any thing which I could make available to throw around me to keep off the rain? I had long since put my Astrakhan cloak on Mrs. Chafferlee.

I had forgotten, so we opened it. One dozen night-dresses, which had just been sent home from the seamstress, starched and ruffled and fluted, and that was all! Leonardus looked down at me with a very comical expression on his face.

"Speak it out; I know what you think," I said.

"Ah, wifey, let the wise vaunt their wisdom. We are spared to each other," and the exquisite joy conferred on me by that little speech tingled to my fingers' ends.

A story-and-a-half house greeted at last our wearied vision. We all put our shoulders to the wheel, or, more strictly speaking, our hands to the wagon, except Esther, who declared that her father's daughter never should be made a pack-horse of. We were admitted, and Mrs. Chafferlee was tenderly cared for on a soft feather bed. We all dropped exhausted around her, on chairs, on the floor, anywhere. The good farmer's wife kindled her kitchen-fire, to prepare us something to eat. Leonardus brought the sticks that built the fire. What powers of endurance! He came to me after a few minutes:

"Now, wifey, you must not borrow any trouble about me. You are safe for the present, and I am going to the city to look after others who are not so well provided for."

I sprang up in alarm.

"What, when you have not had a mouthful of food for thirty-six hours!"

"I am not so forgetful of myself as that. I have been in the pantry, and blundered upon about a yard of cold roast beef. I set myself at work, and, by diligently nibbling I got outside the whole of it. Don't stare so!—I asked permission. The farmer is saddling his best horse, and is going to dress me up in his hat and coat. So, good-by! Sleep and eat, and get freshened up as much as possible before I get back."

Since I could do nothing less than follow his directions, I will permit my readers to follow him.

It was daylight when he first came upon the abomination of desolation. Six miles of ruin! Longitudinally seven or eight! Cellars were filled with smouldering and unsightly heaps of rubbish. The streets were encumbered with *débris*, the sidewalks had tumbled into the vaults, the telegraph-wires, curled and whitened, lay everywhere, and the street-car rails were bent into the most eccentric shapes by the heat. In many instances they stood up out of the car-staples without any fire having touched them, the effects of the intensely heated air. In one place he got off his horse to examine a car-wheel, which was completely welded into the rail. The beautiful dwellings, all through the length and breadth of North Chicago, were laid low, save one, which, standing in the centre of its own grounds, covering a whole block, was left. Ha! what is that he sees in that wild waste? The great greenhouse of the McCaggs, without a pane of glass broken! Their beautiful home gone, the trees stripped of bark and branches, and the flowers untouched! He rode nearer. The heat had brought out the blossoms, and it was like one great, rich, full bouquet! What a sight amid such surroundings! He rode on. The bridges were gone, the elevators were gone, the churches were gone, the newspaper-offices were gone, the banks were gone, the hotels were gone, the great wholesale and retail stores were gone, the school-buildings were gone, the custom-house was gone, the post-office was gone, the city hall was gone, the gas-works were gone,

the water-works were gone, and the railroad-stations were gone. The whole of the great Central Depot might have been carried away in a hand-basket.

As the growth of Chicago was the superlative of all modern history, so, alas! its destruction. The story of it has gone to the ends of the earth, and has called forth everywhere tearful sympathy and generous aid. Thank God for the chords which connect the members of our common humanity! The Gospel doctrine of charity lives in the hearts of all men. While Leonardus, on that sad morning, saw how brick and marble walls had crumbled like sand before the fell destroyer, the importance of our new agents of civilization were being realized by millions of human beings. The railroads, the telegraph, and the deep-sea cables, were mediums by which Christian nations proved that they were indeed Christian to the core. In distant cities, in foreign lands, the tocsin had been rung, and from one common heart gushed bounteous supplies. Laden trains were already flying to the relief of the houseless and starving.

Leonardus, after much difficulty, reached the west side, and found Mrs. Hortense. She was comfortable, but in great distress of mind concerning her daughter. He promised to let her know as soon as he could obtain any information. He galloped on, intending by a long *détour* to reach the unburned portion of the south side, and learn if possible of the fate of Spicy and Mrs. Vance. Somewhere near Twelfth-Street bridge he stopped to hear the story of the vicious cow that had kicked over the kerosene-lamp that had burned up two

hundred millions of dollars, when some one called his name, and, turning his head, he saw Spicy's carriage being reined up to where he was sitting on his horse, with Dr. Gildersleeve in it. They exchanged questions and answers with great rapidity, and started north at a brisk rate, Leonardus keeping as near the carriage-window as his raw-boned old ambler would permit. Dr. Gildersleeve was distressed the moment he learned that Helen had not reached our house, and Leonardus trembled for Mrs. Vance. Spicy was at her friend's cottage with her children, in bed, and tenderly cared for.

They turned aside when north of Lake Street for Leonardus to point out the house where he had left Mrs. Hortense, but they would not take time to stop now. There was a carriage in front of it, however, at which Leonardus looked the second time. An idea struck him, for he asked Dr. Gildersleeve to wait while he rode that way. Yes, it was Richard on the box, holding Mrs. Vance's singed horses. He had stayed on the west side with a friend, but was out early to see whom he could find. Mrs. Hortense was the only person of whom he knew the whereabouts; he had obtained that information from Leonardus among the terrors of yesterday. He thought by applying to her he should get the clew to others. She told him that General Belmore had been there, and was coming again. He waited, and was rewarded.

Leonardus ordered him to follow them, as they were on the search for Mrs. Vance, and the man was only too glad to obey, for he loved his mistress.

The extreme northern limit of the city reached, and they moved slowly and peered anxiously among the groups of dejected-looking people by the waysides. It was enough to wring one's heart to see them in their misery, to say nothing of the heart-rending and harrowing tales of distress to which they could not stop to listen. Lincoln Park, indeed! How hope to find the lost in that incongruous assemblage?

Leaving the carriages and the farmer's horse in charge of the drivers, Leonardus and Dr. Gildersleeve set out on their pilgrimage. They went across, they went up and down, they wound around among the paths and shrubbery, their eyes ever active—ever on the alert.

"Mrs. Vance may have obtained a vehicle and been transported far into the country," said Leonardus.

Just then Cousin Phil nearly ran over him.

"Ay! ay! Belmore, have you seen my mother?"

"No. Have you lost her?"

"I fear so. Our house was burned while I was trying to get a few packages of money out of the bank. I have no idea where to look for her."

"I will take one side of the park and you the other, and we shall thereby compass more territory in the same space of time," said Dr. Gildersleeve, leaving them.

Leonardus and Phil had scarcely proceeded half a hundred yards when they came upon the two pale women, watching by the sleeping dead. Helen Gildersleeve, on the straightened cushions of the easy-chair, was neatly wrapped in

the water-proof, awaiting her last journey. Mrs. Vance was sitting on the ground, and Miss Terrapin's head was lying in her lap. Dr. Greer, who had been revolving all the morning in a circle, without finding any way to relieve the ladies, appeared, and told Leonardus what Mrs. Vance had undergone, and, since her carriage was so near, they both thought it best for her to go immediately to it, Phil offering to remain with Miss Terrapin until Leonardus should overtake Dr. Gildersleeve.

Mrs. Vance was far more exhausted than she had even dreamed, and it was with great difficulty that, leaning on Dr. Greer's arm, she accomplished the distance. He noticed that her shoes were burned almost entirely off her feet, and that her eyelashes were gone. She begged Dr. Greer to go directly back to Miss Terrapin, and, once more buried among the cushions of her own luxurious carriage, gave way to a burst of grief. Richard got down from his seat, came round to the window, and said:

"Don't take on so! Mrs. Chafferlee was carried as safe as a brick. I don't think your block was much burned. I rather guess the girls got the things out of the house, for they are deuced smart workers."

"Thank you, Richard. You are very kind," she replied, and he wiped the dampness from his eyes, and was glad he had made his crude attempt at consolation.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SLEEPING DEAD.

THREE-QUARTERS of an hour passed. Then was seen approaching, slowly, Leonardus and Phil, bearing all that remained of Helen Gildersleeve. Beside them walked her husband, looking ten years older than when he entered the Park, and, following, Dr. Greer assisted Miss Terrapin, who, like Mrs. Vance, could hardly support her own weight. He helped her into the carriage with Mrs. Vance, who, at the first moment possible, held an earnest conversation with Leonardus; then the door of her carriage was closed, and she was on her way to her aunt Mary, at our place of refuge on the prairie.

Dr. Greer and Dr. Gildersleeve were both amazed at the abruptness of her departure. They both wished to speak to her. Dr. Greer had indefinitely formed projects in his mind. Perhaps he might be able to serve her. He had words for her ears, at all events. Dr. Gildersleeve was profoundly grateful to one who had shown such rare self-abnegation in ministering to his unfortunate wife; for Dr. Greer and Miss Terrapin had both borne testimony, during the few minutes he had been with them. He was wondering if the English language could furnish him any form of speech with which to thank her as he wished, when, lo! she was gone, and he had not even seen her face.

His quick mind had settled the question in regard to Helen's remains. They must be taken East and deposited in the old family vault, where her fathers slept. The difficulties in the way, and they

were many, must be overcome by persistent, energetic effort. West Chicago was intact, except the portions near the river, and they could doubtless find some church where she could be received and prepared for removal. They made the attempt, and, not until the dead rested in a simple pine coffin, did Leonardus turn his face ruinward.

The world may well wonder, for where was there ever such undaunted pluck and enterprise manifested as among the business-men of Chicago? With their great commercial structures still crumbling and smoking about them, with their wealth still buried in vaults beneath the ruins, with no assurance as to what measure of indemnity they could expect from the insurance companies for their terrible losses, they were already at work devising ways and means to rebuild the city, and reestablish its commercial supremacy in the West. Leonardus spent the remainder of the day among those cool-headed men, who had already organized relief-committees in every division of the city to provide food and shelter for the destitute, and, not until long after the shades of evening had fallen, did he return to us. He slept on the kitchen-floor, with a buffalo-robe wound about him, and was off again in the morning before the sun was up. There was no repining at losses; although few had lost more heavily than we, no manifestations of discouragement, no faint-heartedness, on his part.

"If Mrs. Vance's carriage is available, try to meet us at the church at one o'clock this afternoon, as there will be brief funeral exercises," were his parting words to me, through the cat-hole

of the door, for five of us occupied improvised beds in one apartment.

He seemed to have room in his heart for every thing, nor was I jealous of my apparently infinitesimal place at such a time.

Fred Gildersleeve arrived from New York that same morning. His brother met him at the train, and prepared his mind for what was to follow. He had passed through a fearful season of excitement and cankering anxiety on his journey. All sorts of rumors had reached him. The telegrams received in New York before he left excited the greatest consternation in view of the probable financial results. The panic at the Stock Exchange was scarcely surpassed by that of the Black Friday, so fresh in the memory of America's sons. One word alone—Chicago—seemed to be the beginning of every sentence uttered in the great metropolis. It was shouted by the newsboys, buzzed by the dealers in stocks, whispered by bankers and startled insurance-agents, discussed aloud by friends and strangers, by people walking and by people riding, by people selling and by people buying, by rich and by poor, by old and by young. Fred Gildersleeve would have moved heaven and earth to reach his wife, had it been possible. But he must wait till the train went. He knew his house was burned long before that huge engine spit and sputtered and puffed and jerked the cars out of New York. He had the utmost confidence in Spicy's heroism and strength of character, but what could a woman do, tied down with three little children? He learned what a woman could do and had done!

I complied with Leonardus's wishes, but neither Mrs. Vance nor Miss Terrapin was able to leave her bed. Mrs. Huberjide and Bright accompanied me, for I had promised the former to drive about among the refugees and try to find her husband.

Dr. Gildersleeve, and his brother, Mrs. Hortense, Dr. Greer, and Leonardus, were already at the church when we arrived. The pastor and two or three strangers were also present. The exercises commenced immediately, and were beautifully appropriate. A few flowers had been scattered on the coffin, and we all took a final farewell glance at the marble face, upon which there was no trace of pain or suffering now—but peace, sweet peace.

I had just time to take Mrs. Hortense's hand and express my ardent sympathy in her affliction, when Leonardus hurried me to the carriage, whispering:

"We are already in danger of missing the train—having waited for you to get here."

Why was I always behind time in every thing? I sat looking after them until they were out of sight, and then turned my attention to Mrs. Huberjide. She knew one family on the west side; she thought it not only possible, but probable, that Mr. Huberjide would report himself there. She told me the number as near as she could remember, and I hunted it up. She was right in her conjectures. Mr. Huberjide was there. He had arrived about an hour before ourselves. He was surprised to meet his wife thus. I don't know what he thought had become of her. He had

run for the lake when he saw the frightful sight of flames striking buildings and going directly through them, often sending their bristling tongues rods into the rear and into some other building at the same moment! What chance was there for a man when the very bricks were consumed instantaneously? He buried himself in sand and water until he was taken off by a tug. He had been forty-eight hours without food, and was finishing a rather long-drawn-out meal of cold meat and bread-and-butter while he talked with us. He declared upon his word as a gentleman of honor that he had never seen such a fire in his life. I believed him. I left Mrs. Huberjide to compare notes and see if they could settle the question between them, which had encountered the most danger.

When I told Leonardus about the interview, he laughed.

"He was a New-York man, you say? That accounts for it all. He can't stand fire. If he and his wife rode in a coal-cart from the Tremont to Indiana Street, I should have supposed they would have hung together to the end of the route. But he probably thought that wives were a commodity which could be got any day—if he should by any chance get burned himself, there would be no more marrying or giving in marriage."

I shook my head reprovingly. I was like Esther, averse to levity on grave subjects. I was glad they had found each other, and I hoped that New York would send them another wedding-outfit.

Before he slept Wednesday night, Fred Gildersleeve had rented a furnished cottage on the lower part of Michigan Avenue, and, on Thursday, moved his

family, with the few things Spicy had saved, into it. The next morning their carriage came for us. I was sorry to leave Mrs. Vance behind, but there was no alternative, for it did not seem prudent to try to move Mrs. Chafferlee. Miss Terrapin was quite sick, also, and Mrs. Vance insisted upon keeping and taking care of her.

"If I have enough money left to insure me a pint of oatmeal per day, I shall settle a pension on Miss Terrapin, for her faithfulness to me on Monday," she said.

But how was it likely to be about her pint of oatmeal per day? That was the question. Dr. Greer had been to the farmer's house to discuss it with her, and had gone away sadder than he came. Leonardus said the land was left, if the blocks of stores and dwellings were gone. She would probably recover something from the Eastern insurance companies. Not one in Chicago would ever pay five cents on a dollar. How was she situated at present? She had not a solitary penny. Her purse, which was in her pocket when she left her house, was not there at a later date. Whether it had been lost or stolen, it was all the same—gone. Leonardus hadn't any money. He had paid his last dollar to a boy for running with a message for him during the second hour of the fire. I hadn't any, not even a pocket-book. I left that under my pillow, where I usually put it at night.

But Spicy always had money, and I promised to send some to Mrs. Vance for present necessities, as soon as we got to the south side.

What was my consternation on find-

ing Spicy without a dollar! She had paid all she had to workmen and others during the fire. And, what was more embarrassing still, Fred had returned from New York with less than twenty-five dollars in his pocket, and that had all been spent in getting his family safely housed.

"We are a pretty set!" said Leonardus, walking up and down.

"Haven't you any credit?" asked Fred.

"I did have, but it is in dust and ashes now. I dare say I shall have again, but I should like a quarter or ten cents to carry in my pocket meanwhile. It makes a man feel more like a man, you know."

"How would it do to set up a curiosity-stand and charge five cents a look?" said Fred, producing some half-melted sleeve-buttons which he had picked up, and which were in themselves mournful evidences of the nation's calamity.

"That reminds me," said Leonardus, "of a stick of petrified wood which was shown me yesterday. It had been exhumed from under a drug-store where it is supposed to have been converted into stone by some new and hitherto undiscovered process connected with the fire. It really had the density and weight of stone. Some thought it maple by the grain, others declared it pine, judging from the pitch-deposits which seemed to be in it. It was cut up and distributed among quite a number of gentlemen, and a piece is to be submitted to Prof. Pagan, of St. Louis, who, if you remember, lost his position as State geologist, by refusing to acknowledge that tin grew in Missouri."

"I saw something still more remarkable to-day," said Fred. "I saw the Hon. Clemence Fortescue, State Senator of Nebraska, carrying in a ton of coal by hand. He came to Chicago as fast as steam could bring him, as soon as he heard of the fire, for he had a brother here who had lost his place of business. They knocked round, and put up a little shanty with such material as they could get hold of, and, as he was aching for something more to do, he lent a ready ear and a helping hod to a poor woman who was bewailing the fate of a heap of unprotected coal which had been dumped in front of her door. I inquired if she was husbandless and a widow. He said not. It was an instance of pure good-nature. Charity had nothing to do with it, for the woman had not been touched by the fire, she only was afraid her fuel would be stolen. Her husband was on a neighboring corner, talking loudly, and calling our city officials idiots for letting every thing go to the mischief."

Leonardus's lip curled under his mustache, but he continued his promenade. At one end of the library was a small conservatory filled with choice plants and flowers, and, conspicuous there, a tube-rose, much too weighty for its feeble stalk, was trying to open its petals. He paused before the glass door and regarded it intently, then turned abruptly toward Fred.

"How did you happen to find this gem of a cottage all fitted up as it were to order? It never occurred to me to inquire before."

Fred smiled. There was something very peculiar about Fred's smile. "Ah, general, thereby hangs a tale. It was

the third house I rented on that memorable Wednesday which seems a month ago, judging from events since, after we parted with Brother Grandison at the cars. The first belonged to my old partner Stevens. I met him just after you left me at the corner of Wabash Avenue and Eighteenth Street, and, as he did not seem to be going anywhere in particular, I offered to take him there. He was in a state of great nervous excitement, had lost heavily, had been without sleep for three days and nights, and was nearly famished for want of food. He talked about sending his family to friends in Pittsburg, and I proposed to rent his house off his hands. The idea struck him favorably, we discussed all the *pros* and *cons*, and closed the bargain, except signing the lease, which was to be accomplished in the course of the day. I stopped to see Spicy, and was to join him at the house, which I wished to examine, in half an hour. When I arrived, according to appointment, I found his practical wife just closing an arrangement with another gentleman. Stevens undertook an explanation, but I did not wait to hear it. I hurried to the next block, where I could see a sign swinging. Found a decent three-story brick, the paste on the notice 'TO LET,' not yet dry. The proprietor rented it to me for one hundred dollars per month, and I left, to see about raising the requisite amount of money to advance before putting our names to papers. The man knew me, hence I had no fears of his breaking his word. I stopped to see Spicy again, for you must know that I had as yet exchanged but a few words with her. The doctor, who seemed wretchedly anxious as to the re-

sults of her extreme prostration, stood guard at her door, and forbade our talking over five minutes at a time, and prohibited a word of reference to the late terrible scenes which she had passed through. I took my carriage, which had just been put in the barn, for a drive out to Danforth's on the west side, knowing that he always kept money at his house, and never doubting but that he would cash a draft for me on New York. I was hindered for a few minutes talking with some gentlemen at Twelfth-Street bridge, and a little beyond I met Charles Hinchman. He was on horseback, riding furiously, but reined up to shake hands with me through the carriage-window—said his family were yet in the open air somewhere on the north side, but that he had hired a house, and was going for them, hoping to get them under cover before nightfall. I congratulated him upon having found such a rare commodity as a house, and told him how I had been similarly blessed. He inquired where mine was located, and I told him No. — Wabash Avenue.

"What! in the Wilmarth block?"

"Yes."

"Impossible! I have just rented that house myself."

"I engaged to pay one hundred dollars per month for it not more than an hour ago!"

"And I signed a lease agreeing to give two hundred dollars per month not twenty minutes since!"

"There was no longer any question about who had the best right to the establishment. The afternoon was waning, and we did not waste many more minutes together. I drove up and down and

over and across; I inquired everywhere and of everybody. I was told it was of no use. Others had scoured every inch of the standing part of the city, and there was not a house of any sort to be had. I was about to give up the search for that day, when my eye lighted upon a bit of paper pinned upon the door of this cottage. In an instant I was upon the steps, and five gentlemen followed me. In answer to my violent ring a lady opened the door, evidently much agitated. I asked the rent of the house.

"One hundred and twenty-five dollars per month," she said, in a feverish tone.

"I will take it, you may tell these gentlemen the house is rented," I replied, quickly, and walked in while saying so, although the lady stepped aside to let me pass her with apparent reluctance.

"My son has already gone out to inquire after the responsibility of four or five applicants, and I cannot give you an answer now," she said, turning slightly pale.

"But I will take the house, and I must have my answer now," I replied, authoritatively, and, dropping into a chair by the centre-table, I commenced writing with my pocket-pencil upon a scrap of paper which lay there.

"What are you doing?" she asked, with a distressed look.

"Drawing up a contract for you to sign."

"Indeed, sir, I cannot sign any contract now, nor give you the refusal of the house even, until my son returns. Please don't try to take advantage of an unprotected lady."

"Have no fears on that score, mad-

am; on the contrary, I will endeavor to protect you. And, as those gentlemen upon the steps are rather clamorous for admittance, you had better tell them the house is rented, for I shall take it."

"She looked at me with incredulous wonder! Her situation must have been a painful one. She had been induced to put her house in the market in order to fly to some safer abode, but had never dreamed that overwhelming numbers would wrangle with each other in order to secure it!—There was a scuffle on the veranda, and one man knocked another down. She ran to the window, then came back, trembling.

"But, sir, I do not even know your name!"

"Fred Gildersleeve."

"She started, and her countenance changed.

"Are you he who married Spicy Merriman?"

"The same. Do you know her?"

"A broad belt of light crossed her face, and, stepping quickly to the door, she announced to the impatient outsiders that the house was rented. Then she explained. Her daughter was one of Miss Gilbert's pupils, and had known Spicy at school, etc."

"I finished my contract, which was to the effect that, in consideration of ten dollars, by me paid, Mrs. Sontag was to rent me her house, at eight o'clock the same evening. She remarked:

"I should like the privilege of reserving my silver and linen."

"It was the first intimation I had that I was renting a *furnished* house! I had been so eager to obtain the mere shell of a building, that I had thought of

nothing beyond. I quietly put back my pencil and inserted the word *furnished*, while I graciously permitted the owner to reserve the customary articles! To make a sure thing doubly sure, after she had signed the paper, I took out my three-hundred dollar watch, and insisted upon her retaining it until my return. She was loth to do so; said she did not wish to incur such a responsibility, it might be stolen, or the remainder of the city might burn; but I made her keep it. I then drove over to Danforth's, and, to my surprise, he refused to cash my paper! Said the whole country would go to smash, New York banks and all. Said he hadn't a dollar, but he knew I knew that he was lying. It was eight o'clock by the time I got back to Mrs. Sontag's, and I found her with trunks packed and anxious to leave for the East on the ten-o'clock evening train. She seemed to think what was left of the city would certainly burn before she could get out of its limits. As she was going to New York, I offered her a sight-draft, which she accepted; the whole business was closed—she went out, and we came in."

"There is something strikingly familiar in the fashion of these rooms," said Leonardus. He had twice walked to the parlor-door, as if on a tour of observation, while Fred had been telling his story.

An idea ran like a knife through my brain just at that instant! We were in the old Dwight mansion, which had been moved down-town, backed upon a corner lot, and remodelled and fitted up until it was not so much to be wondered at that we did not recognize it readily.

Spicy, propped up with cushions on the sofa, laughed quite like herself when I pointed out the old familiar niches in the walls. But her face saddened again instantly, for the associations of the ghost-closet, the recent revelation, and the sad termination of the life of poor Helen Gildersleeve, were too painfully fresh in her mind. And I thought of Nursy Brown, and what she must have suffered during the time she lived with me as a servant, for the very shape of the windows and doors, notwithstanding their new dress, carried me back to those other and long-ago days. Fred interrupted my reverie, for we had all been eloquently silent for a time.

"But about this money-matter, general; if you won't undertake to make any by honest labor, we shall be relieved as soon as Grandison gets back, next week, for he is so fortunate as to have his laid away at the East, and will be prepared to help the rest of us until we can stand on our own feet."

"Water seems of more account than money just now," said Spicy. "There is none nearer than the lake, and we shall need some dinner by-and-by."

"That is only a few blocks away! John must bring some instead of driving us to the ruins. We will take the cars."

"The cars, indeed! who will pay for us? I think we will take to our feet," said Leonardus, laughing.

"And how about the dinner?" asked Spicy. "If there are no butcher-shops and groceries, and no supplies in the city, and no money—"

Fred laid his hand across her mouth. "Do you remember the mock-trial on board the steanboat last summer, when

the culprit was sentenced to be hanged, after that imprisoned for life, and, upon his release, doomed to join the temperance-society?"

"I am not able to make the application," interrupted Leonardus.

"I suppose not, since it does not reach your case. But it is hardly worth while for us to sit and look at each other like a party of children who have lost all their marbles—particularly when it is a matter of something to eat. I am getting up an appetite myself. Come, general, let us go on a foraging expedition."

"I don't see what you *can* do!" said Spicy.

"Trust two good-looking men to scare up something. Was it not I who invented a potato-candlestick last night? Have you no blind faith? I don't think I shall apply to the relief-committee, of which General Belmore here happens to be one, unless it is for a cigar. I'm dying for a smoke," and Fred kissed Spicy, and the two strode away.

Saturday morning I went over to see Mrs. Vance, and recited the various straits to which we had all been subjected by the want of a few dollars in change. Who ever knew before that one had so many ways for money? It was just as impossible to borrow as it was to lend! Where one was as well off as we, ten thousand were worse off. Money! such a thing was not in circulation!

Mrs. Vance smiled.

"It is something of a shock to drop from an income of one hundred thousand dollars a year to nothing," she said.

"Yes, and to be cut off from every

souvenir of the past, as I am. Not a fragment of any thing exists that was once mine. Not even a pocket-handkerchief, nor a precious gift, nor jewel, nor pen-stroke—all my idols are gone."

I was weak enough to break down there, for what I had had, and I fear too lightly appreciated, came rushing into my mind, and Mrs. Vance sprang and threw her arms around me and kissed, me without speaking. Was she weeping, also?

I recovered myself presently, for I thought of Leonardus, and how much harder the blow had fallen upon him than me, and I went to the window and commented upon the fine-looking chickens which were stalking up and down the yard, and asked Mrs. Vance how her horses liked boarding on hay.

She said Richard was in the greatest distress for want of a curry-comb and brush.

After a while I got back to the original object of my visit, to tell her how the dreadful money-pinch would be over as soon as Dr. Gildersleeve returned, for he was expected to bring a small bank in his trunk.

Oh, how quickly the spirit took alarm!

"You need not be weighed down with care for me, my dear Mrs. Belmore. Aunt Mary is now able to go to Detroit, and I shall leave on Monday. The railroad is issuing free tickets—hush (as I attempted to interrupt her)! what matters it if I do accept the provisions of a grand and spontaneous charity? I would not even hesitate to dwell under one of those twelve thousand tents which have been sent to shelter the houseless. But

it is not necessary. I have distant relatives in Detroit, or rather Aunt Mary has, and they will give us cordial welcome. Herbert, her son, is in a position to help her, and for the rest I must trust in God. The good farmer here declines to accept any compensation for his services, as he did in your case; but he will be the first one I shall remember if ever my turn comes."

I tried to combat her purpose. Fred and Spicy had a room designated for her in their house. But she was firm. As for Miss Terrapin, I took her home with me. How she mourned over the loss of her wig! Her few scattering hairs, which had not been white before the fire, were white now, and she felt the October cold about her head keenly.

"Are all the hair-dressing establishments burned?" was her pathetic inquiry when I commenced making her toilet, preparatory to the drive, with a coarse horn-comb, belonging to the farmer's wife.

Yes. But I bade her never mind. We should be quite exclusive and by ourselves. Nobody need see her. She appeared resigned. But, when I had completed the task, she asked for a looking-glass.

"Singular that my hair should turn as it has! But it always run in our family to get gray young."

Esther, quite indignant that we were not forthcoming in the pay for her baggage, which had been destroyed, left us on Wednesday morning, and went to look for another place. I had taken Maggie with me to my sister's house, and the indefatigable Richard had stumbled about until he had found Mrs.

Vance's servants, and they were with her assisting in the care of Mrs. Chafferee, until she could make some provision for them.

I intended to meet Mrs. Vance on Monday, but one of Spicy's horses was sick, and I could not get to her. A note from her on Tuesday told of her safe arrival in Detroit, and the kindness of her friends.

Dr. Gildersleeve arrived on Wednesday evening, having left Mrs. Hortense with her relatives. He brought a rift of sunshine with him, in the shape of a warm heart and plenty of greenbacks. He was more fortunate than any of us, for, save in his paper, which was bound to live and thrive, in spite of its scorching, he had invested very little in Chicago. He was ready to do so now. I heard him saying to Leonardus:

"She has all the elements of a great city left, except the mere buildings. Look at her river-harbor, which has been dredged and enlarged, at enormous expense! And her piers and breakwaters. See her light-houses, for the security of navigation! See her tunnel under Lake Michigan, competent to supply a city of thrice her recent magnitude with pure water! Then there is her expensive system of sewerage, which, being underground, and of incombustible material, of course has not been consumed! And all the grading of her streets and the excavation of her cellars and vaults! And her vast cattle-yards and pork-packing establishments! The loss of her railroad-depots, however severely felt, will not obstruct travel and traffic, for passengers can be received and landed, and freight delivered, in the open air!

And, what is more, Chicago has not lost her shrewd, enterprising, energetic, indomitable men of business. The brilliant, powerful city of a week ago has still its financial, commercial, social, and domestic roots stretched to the remote quarters of the earth; its marked quotations and opinions in all American cities; its prices of grains, hides, and lumber, in Europe; its trade connections reaching through San Francisco to China and Japan, and its personal family ties everywhere. Her sorrow is a common sorrow. Her uprising from her ashes will be a common joy."

His earnestness and well-timed and efficient aid stimulated and inspired many a desponding heart. Leonardus said men's faces brightened when he appeared among them. His own was grave, but there was a well of tenderness hidden behind its outward seeming. He had encouraging words for all, and something in his purse for many more than the world would ever discover.

He was ceaseless in his inquiries for Mrs. Vance. He wanted to render her some substantial token of his appreciation of her unspeakable kindness to his wife. He charged me with many and various messages, which I never delivered. He knew that she had been robbed of all her possessions; he had heard us make many and frequent allusions to it, and wondered why Spicy and myself were so opposed to his sending her a check. I told him that she was too high-toned a woman to accept a favor, even though it might come in the spirit of gratitude on his part, and be entirely her due. Then he tried to force it upon one or the other of us to send as

we saw fit, and was grieved that we should decline.

We remained with Spicy while Leonardus laid the foundations of new fortunes and hopes. He had lost so heavily that we tried not to think or talk of it between ourselves. Every word was like blistering a bleeding wound.

Fred Gildersleeve, thanks to his wife, had only received a set back of a few months. Choice possessions had been burned which no money could ever replace, but from the great bulk of his solid property he had only to count out about one year's income.

I heard from Mrs. Vance often. Leonardus tried to do something for her when he was in New York and Boston, but insurance-money came slowly. Her letters were cheerful—far more so than mine—although I was sure that she must have many and pressing needs to which she made no allusion.

The new year had dawned upon us, and Russia's royal scion, the Grand-duke Alexis, had been entertained with the most magnificent ruins of the age. It was all Chicago had to offer, save warm and cordial greetings, and profoundest respect for the powerful and enlightened nation which he represented. He was her guest, and his princely presence infused new life into her working heroes, although the city could not indulge in an ostentatious and formal reception. She could only extend the right hand of fellowship and lie in very ruins at his feet.

Leonardus returned from Milwaukee the day after the grand banquet at the Plankinton House. We were all anxious to learn particulars. He described the

order in which the guests were seated at the table.

"The grand-duke was the centre of attraction. He was dressed in orthodox clothes, and, except that he was the handsomest man present, could not have been distinguished from the other guests. He seems to be rather of an investigating and practical turn of mind, and cares, I think, more for a clear insight into our customs, resources, and manufacturing interests, than for state dinners."

"And what of the speeches?" asked Fred.

"Excellent. What the grand-duke said was pithy and to the point. Admiral Polin responded to the toast, 'The Russian Navy.' But the happiest speech of the evening was from Count Boris. I can recall only a part of it, but, speaking of his present trip through the West, he said that he realized more than ever before that 'westward the star of empire takes its way,' was no legend, but a fixed fact. But, in Russia, eastward the star of empire works its way, and he hoped the time would soon come when the relations of Russia and America would become so intimate that a ferry-boat should ply Behring Straits."

"Who is Count Boris?" inquired Spicy.

"The leading Russian in America at the present time, with the exception of Prince Alexis himself," replied Leonardus. "But I must hasten to tell you of an Eastern capitalist whom I run upon as I was crossing over from the Milwaukee cars. He is feeling round for a place to pile up a few loose dollars, and I called his attention to the site of Mrs. Vance's Lake-Street block. I am to see him in

the morning, and I should not be surprised if she got a bid."

I hoped so most sincerely. It was several weeks afterward, however, before my hopes were realized, for he was one of those cautious men who look long before investing. But he at last made a direct offer for its purchase. Leonardus telegraphed to Mrs. Vance to come to Chicago in the next train, and I went to the cars to receive her.

Dr. Gildersleeve was staying with us, and was cognizant of all the facts, except that he only knew of Mrs. Vance as Mrs. Vance.

It was just before dinner when she arrived. Cheerful grate-fires were burning in parlor, library, and dining-room. Spicy had arranged about the apartments a half-dozen or more pretty bouquets from her private conservatory, and the perfume of unseen heliotrope was everywhere faint and sweet. Leonardus had been with me to the train, and Fred and Spicy were rarely more cordial than when welcoming their present guest.

In spite of the fatigue of a cold day's journey, I never saw a woman so well worth looking at. Her head, poised like that of a queen, and her stylish travelling-suit of soft drab merino, with hat to match, suiting her so wonderfully. Her costume simple enough, and, as I afterward learned, the work of her own hands, but so artistic in its finish that I could only think of Raphael's draperies. The absence of life-giving colors, so trying to most people, was singularly effective in bringing out the full brilliancy of her complexion, and in giving life and expression to her classic features. Her beauty was of a kind to grow upon one,

like some incomprehensible masterpiece of art. She was glad to see us, and her face was lighted with the genial warmth of her nature; but, did I fancy that her sweet graciousness, which had so won my heart in the days gone by, had given place to a certain *hauteur* of manner? It did not occur to me that I had noticed the same thing, and thought the same thoughts, every time I had met her for years! She was a study, and I went on studying her, while I laid her wraps one after another upon the sofa, and wheeled a large easy-chair toward the fire for her to occupy.

At that moment Dr. Gildersleeve, who had been engrossed with a book in the library during our somewhat noisy greetings, entered the parlor, and I introduced him directly to Mrs. Vance; but, with all our conjectures and divinations, we were totally unprepared for what followed.

Mrs. Vance flushed violently, even her lips turned scarlet, as her eyes met those of Dr. Gildersleeve. He had advanced with extended hand, but he suddenly stood still, his arm dropping powerless by his side, and his face whitening until it was ashy pale. He had recognized her, and I felt, as it were, through the air, the shock by which the whole truth flooded his mind. Who may ever know what words were scorching his tongue, and crying, like souls in pain, to be uttered? Tears—youth's long-lost familiars—glittered in his speaking eyes, as they rested upon her with a sort of reverential awe; and yet, the concentrated passion of months and of years flashed in their heart-searching gaze. What did he read in the depths of her blue orbs?

Why stood they there in silence, as if regarding each other from the lonely length of each life? Are there loves in this world for which time can renew all that time may destroy? Are there lives that cling to one faith and die with it? His voice came at last, husky, yet thrilling:

"Ida!"

The response was soft, and sweet as a tune that one knows.

"Grandison!"

I did not see, but by some mysterious intuition I was conscious, that he had snatched her to his heart. I did not hear, but a low, short, sharp, stifled, agonized sob from her lips was telegraphed to my senses. I was in the dining-room endeavoring to suppress a fit of hysterics, to which I was not at all subject. Spicy was there before me, busy moving each plate and individual butter about an inch farther toward the head of the table, and then, having separated them too far from their napkins, moved them all back again. Something sparkled on her cheek like a diamond, but I supposed it couldn't be one, since it is not the customary place to wear diamonds. Rather unexpectedly she wound her arms round my neck.

"What a *secret* that has been for us to keep!" she said.

Raising my eyes after a while, when the shower had passed by, I saw Fred leaning against the library mantel in his usual attitude of ease and self-possession. One hand toyed negligently with the flowers in a vase, and, as the leaves scattered, he carefully brushed them back from the edge of the marble, that they might not fall upon the carpet. He was

never handsomer, nor his tone steadier, than when, with a perplexed frown, he summoned Spicy to his side to ask for a solution of what now for the first time, since hearing her remark, struck him as an inexplicable problem. I did not hear their conversation, but the secret which Spicy had kept so long was a secret no longer, as far as he was concerned.

Bright was the most considerate member of the family, for, in quietly leaving the parlor, after seeing the rest of us do so, he shut the door behind him.

"Mamma!" said he, softly, looking very much disturbed, "I saw Dr. Gildersleeve kiss Mrs. Vance, and she never tried to go away, nor any thing! But I suppose it is their own affair, and you must not tell it to any one."

Leonardus came down from the nursery presently, where he had been romping "with Spicy's little soldiers," he said. I am sure I don't know when he went up there! He took me to task for leaving my guest so rudely.

"Mrs. Vance is a woman of genius, and will credit you with plotting against her peace."

"She may be a woman of genius, but she is essentially human," I responded.

But the dinner was spoiling, and the cook showed symptoms of impatience by sending two or three times to know if we were ready to have it put upon the table. Spicy said I must go back to the parlor and do the honors, while she went up-stairs to her children for a few moments. Fred and Leonardus were both of the opinion that it was a duty which devolved upon me. Bright said:

"Mamma, hadn't you better rattle the door a little before you go in?"

I only coughed. The occupants of the parlor did not seem to notice my consumptive tendencies. They were standing where we left them, Dr. Gildersleeve's arms encircling Mrs. Vance, and her proud head resting upon his broad bosom, as it would henceforth evermore rest. He was saying, as I approached them:

"Ida, in those long-ago summer days at Rockland Place, had I spoken, might I have hoped then?"

"You might."

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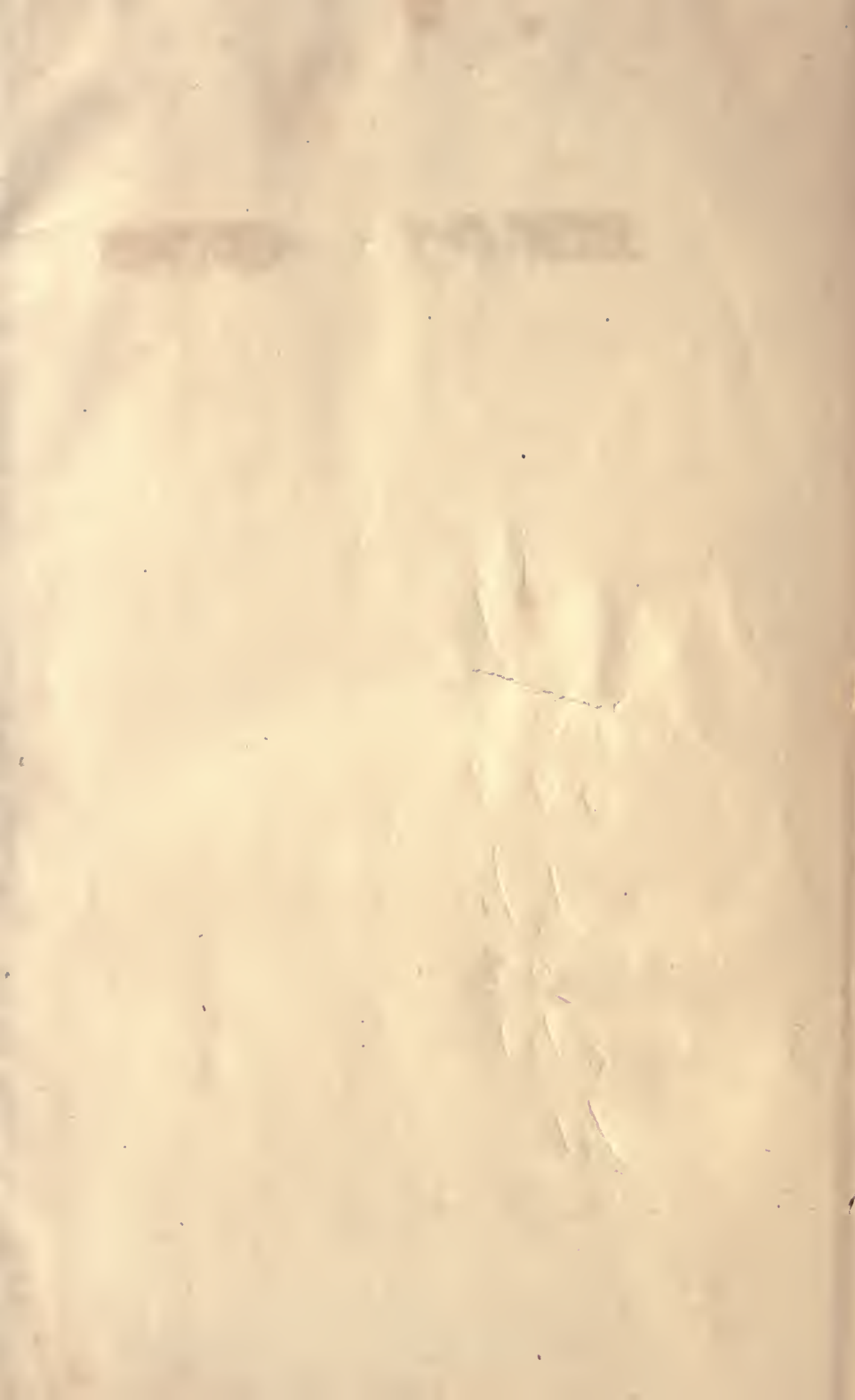
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